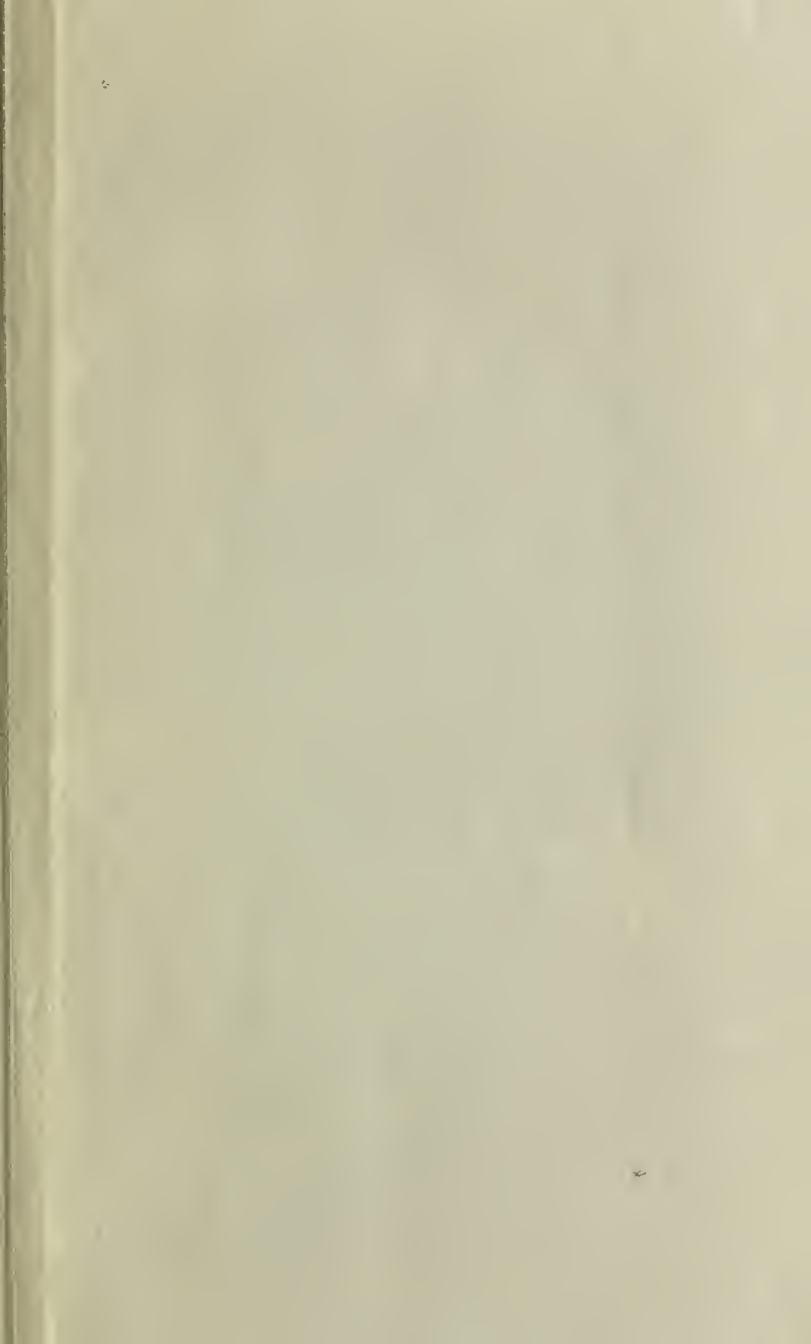






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DEVEREUX.

A TALE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "PELHAM."

"He that knows most men's manners, must of necessity
Best know his own, and mend those by example.

————— Pure and strong spirits
Do, like the fire, still covet to fly upward."

The Queen of Corinth, Act 2, Scene 4.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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DEVEREUX.

ERRATA.

VOL. II.

Page 48, line 2 from the top, for "to myself that of twenty thousand," read "to myself that of twenty thousand pounds."

245, --- 22, for "of expressive vigilance," read "*expressive of vigilance.*"

SPINOSA is said to have loved, above all other amusements, to put flies into a spider's web; and the struggles of the imprisoned insects were wont to bear, in the eyes of this grave philosopher, so facetious and hilarious an appearance, that he would stand and laugh thereat until the tears "coursed

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DEVEREUX.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

Wherein the History makes great Progress, and is marked by one important Event in Human Life.

SPINOSA is said to have loved, above all other amusements, to put flies into a spider's web ; and the struggles of the imprisoned insects were wont to bear, in the eyes of this grave philosopher, so facetious and hilarious an appearance, that he would stand and laugh thereat until the tears " coursed

one another down his innocent nose." Now it so happeneth, that Spinosā, despite the general (and, in my most meek opinion, the just) condemnation of his theoretical tenets,* was, in character and in nature, according to the voices of all who knew him, an exceedingly kind, humane, and benevolent biped; and it doth, therefore, seem a little strange unto us grave, sober members of the unphilosophical οἱ πολλοί, that the struggles and terrors of these little-winged creatures should strike the good subtleist in a point of view so irresistibly ludicrous and delightful. But, for my part, I believe that that most imaginative and wild speculator, beheld in the entangled flies nothing more than a living simile—an animated illustration—of his own beloved vision of Necessity; and that he is no more to be considered cruel for the complacency with which he gazed upon these agonized types of his system, than is Lucan for dwelling, with a poet's pleasure,

* One ought, however, to be very cautious before one condemns a philosopher. The master's opinions are generally pure—it is the conclusions and corollaries of his disciples that "draw the honey forth that drives men mad." Schlegel seems to have studied Spinosā *de fonte*, and vindicates him very earnestly from the charges brought against him—atheism, &c.—ED.

upon the many ingenious ways with which that grand inquisitor of verse has contrived to vary the simple operation of dying. To the bard, the butchered soldier was only an epic ornament; to the philosopher, the murdered fly was only a metaphysical illustration. For, without being a Fatalist, or a disciple of Baruch de Spinoza, I must confess that I cannot conceive a greater resemblance to our human and earthly state, than the penible predicament of the devoted flies. Suddenly do we find ourselves plunged into that Vast Web—the World; and even as the insect, when he first undergoeth a similar accident of necessity, standeth amazed and still, and only, by little and little, awakeneth to a full sense of his situation; so also at the first, abashed and confounded, we remain on the mesh we are urged upon, ignorant, as yet, of the toils around us, and the sly, dark, immitigable foe, that lieth in yonder nook, already feasting her imagination upon our destruction. Presently we revive—we stir—we flutter—and Fate, that foe—the old arch-spider, that hath no moderation in her maw—now fixeth one of her many eyes upon us, and giveth us a partial glimpse

of her laidly and grim aspect. We pause in mute terror—we gaze upon the ugly spectre, so imperfectly beheld—the net ceases to tremble, and the wily enemy draws gently back into her nook. Now we begin to breathe again—we sound the strange footing on which we tread—we move tenderly along it, and again the grizzly monster advances on us ; again we pause—the foe retires not, but remains still, and surveyeth us ;—we see every step is accompanied with danger—we look round and above in despair—suddenly we feel within us a new impulse and a new power !—we feel a vague sympathy with *that* unknown region which spreads *beyond* this great net ;—*that limitless beyond*, hath a mystic affinity with a part of our own frame—we unconsciously extend our wings (for the soul to us is as the wings to the fly)—we attempt to rise—to soar above this perilous snare, from which we are unable to crawl. The old spider watcheth us in self-hugging quiet, and, looking up to our native air, we think—now shall we escape thee.—Out on it ! We rise not a hair's breadth—we have the *wings*, it is true, but the *feet* are fettered. We strive desperately again—the

whole web vibrates with the effort—it will break beneath our strength. Not a jot of it!—we cease—we are more entangled than ever! wings—feet—frame—the foul slime is over all!—where shall we turn? every line of the web leads to the one den,—we know not—we care not—we grow blind—confused—lost. The eyes of our hideous foe gloat upon us—she wetteth her insatiate maw—she leapeth towards us—she fixeth her fangs upon us—and so endeth my parallel!

But what has this to do with my tale? Ay, Reader, that is thy question; and I will answer it by one of mine. When thou hearest a man moralize and preach of Fate, art thou not sure that he is going to tell thee of some one of his peculiar misfortunes? Sorrow loves a parable as much as mirth loves a jest. And thus, already and from afar, I prepare thee, at the commencement of this, the third of those portions into which the history of my various and wild life will be divided, for that event with which I purpose that the said portion shall be concluded.

It is now three months after my entire recovery from my wounds, and I am married to Isora!—

married—yes, but *privately* married, and the ceremony is as yet closely concealed. I will explain.

The moment Isora's anxiety for me led her across the threshold of my house, it became necessary for her honour that our wedding should take place immediately on my recovery---so far I was decided on the measure---now for the method. During my illness, I received a long and most affectionate letter from Aubrey, who was then at Devereux Court,---so affectionate was the heart-breathing spirit of that letter---so steeped in all our old household remembrances and boyish feelings, that, coupled as it was with a certain gloom when he spoke of himself and of worldly sins and trials, it brought tears to my eyes whenever I recurred to it;---and many and many a time afterwards, when I thought his affections seemed estranged from me, I did recur to it to convince myself that I was mistaken. Shortly afterwards I received also a brief epistle from my uncle; it was as kind as usual, and it mentioned Aubrey's return to Devereux Court: "That unhappy boy," said Sir William, "is more than ever devoted to his religious duties; nor do I believe that any priest-rid-

den poor devil, in the dark ages, ever made such use of the scourge and the penance."

Now, I have before stated, that my uncle would, I knew, be averse to my intended marriage; and on hearing that Aubrey was then with him, I resolved, in replying to his letter, to entreat the former to sound Sir William on the subject I had most at heart, and ascertain the exact nature and extent of the opposition I should have to encounter in the step that I was resolved to take. By the same post I wrote to the good old knight in as artful a strain as I was able, dwelling at some length upon my passion, upon the high birth, as well as the numerous good qualities of the object, but mentioning not her name; and I added every thing that I thought likely to enlist my uncle's kind and warm feelings on my behalf. These letters produced the following ones:

From Sir William Devereux.

"'SDEATH! nephew Morton—but I won't scold thee, though thou deservest it. Let me see, thou art now scarce twenty, and thou talkest of marriage, which is the exclusive business of

middle age, as familiarly as ‘girls of thirteen do of puppy dogs.’ Marry!—go hang thyself rather. Marriage, my dear boy, is at the best a treacherous proceeding; and a friend—a true friend, will never counsel another to adopt it rashly. Look you—I have had experience in these matters: and, I think the moment a woman is wedded, some terrible revolution happens in her system; all her former good qualities vanish, *hey presto*, like eggs out of a conjuror’s box,—’tis true they appear on ’tother side of the box, the side turned to other people, but for the poor husband they are gone for ever. Od’s fish, Morton, go to! I tell thee again that I have had experience in these matters, which thou never hast had, clever as thou thinkest thyself. If now it were a good marriage thou wast about to make—if thou wert going to wed power, and money, and places at court, why, something might be said for thee. As it is, there is no excuse—none. And I am astonished how a boy of thy sense could think of such nonsense. Birth, Morton, what the devil does that signify, so long as it is birth in another country? A foreign damsel, and a Spanish girl, too, above all others!

'Sdeath, man, as if there was not quicksilver enough in the English women for you, you must make a mercurial exportation from Spain, must you ! Why, Morton—Morton, the ladies in that country are proverbial.—I tremble at the very thought of it. But as for my consent I never will give it—never ; and though I threaten thee not with disinheritance and such like, yet I do ask something in return for the great affection I have always borne thee ; and I make no doubt that thou wilt readily oblige me in such a trifle as giving up a mere Spanish donna. So think of her no more. If thou wantest to make love, there are ladies in plenty whom thou needest not to marry. And for my part, I thought that thou wast all in all with the Lady Hasselton—Heaven bless her pretty face ! Now don't think I want to scold thee—and don't think thine old uncle harsh—God knows he is not ; but, my dear, dear boy, this is quite out of the question, and thou must let me hear no more about it. The gout cripples me so, that I must leave off. Ever thine own old uncle,

“ WILLIAM DEVEREUX.”

“P.S. Upon consideration, I think, my dear boy, that thou must want money, and thou art ever too sparing. Messrs. Child, or my goldsmiths in Aldersgate, have my orders to pay to thy hands writing whatever thou mayst desire; and I do hope that thou wilt now want nothing to make thee merry withal. Why dost thou not write a comedy? is it not the mode still?”

LETTER FROM AUBREY DEVEREUX.

“I HAVE sounded my uncle, dearest Morton, according to your wishes; and I grieve to say that I have found him inexorable. He was very much hurt by your letter to him, and declared he should write to you forthwith upon the subject. I represented to him all that you have said upon the virtues of your intended bride; and I also insisted upon your clear judgment and strong sense upon most points, being a sufficient surety for your prudence upon this. But you know the libertine opinions, and the depreciating judgment of women, entertained by my poor uncle; and he would, I believe, have been less displeased with

the heinous crime of an illicit connexion, than the amiable weakness of an imprudent marriage—I might say of any marriage, until it was time to provide heirs to the estate.”

Here Aubrey, in the most affectionate and earnest manner, broke off to point out to me the extreme danger to my interests that it would be to disoblige my uncle; who, despite his general kindness, would, upon a disagreement on so tender a matter as his sore point, and his most cherished hobby, consider my disobedience as a personal affront. He also recalled to me, all that my uncle had felt and done for me; and insisted, at all events, upon the absolute duty of my delaying, even though I would not break off, the intended measure. Upon these points he enlarged much and eloquently; and this part of his letter certainly left no cheering or comfortable impression upon my mind.

Now my good uncle knew as much of love, as L. Mummius did of the fine arts,* and it was im-

* A Roman consul, who removing the most celebrated remains of Grecian antiquity to Rome, assured the persons charged with conveying them that if they injured any, they should make others to replace them.

possible to persuade him, that if one wanted to indulge the tender passion, one woman would not do exactly as well as another, provided she were equally pretty. I knew therefore that he was incapable, on the one hand, of understanding my love for Isora, or, on the other, of acknowledging her claims upon me. I had not, of course, mentioned to him the generous imprudence which, on the news of my wound, had brought Isora to my house: for if I had done so, my uncle, with the eye of a courtier of Charles II., would only have seen the advantage to be derived from the impropriety, not the gratitude due to the devotion; neither had I mentioned this circumstance to Aubrey,—it seemed to me too delicate for any written communication; and therefore, in his advice to delay my marriage, he was unaware of that necessity which rendered the advice unavailing. Now then was I in this dilemma, either to marry, and that *instantly*, and so, seemingly, with the most hasty and the most insolent indecorum, incense, wound, and in his interpretation of the act, condemn one whom I loved as I loved my uncle,—or, to delay the marriage, to separate from Isora, and to leave

my future wife to the malignant consequences that would necessarily be drawn from a sojourn of weeks in my house. This fact there was no chance of concealing ; servants—the rascals, how I loathe them !—have more tongues than Argus had eyes, and my youthful extravagance had filled my whole house with those pests of society. The latter measure was impossible, the former was most painful. Was there no third way ?—there was that of a private marriage. This obviated not every evil ; but it removed many : it satisfied my impatient love, it placed Isora under a sure protection, it secured and established her honour the moment the ceremony should be declared, and it avoided the seeming ingratitude and indelicacy of disobeying my uncle, without an effort of patience to appease him. I should have time and occasion then, I thought, for soothing and persuading him, and ultimately winning that consent which I firmly trusted I should sooner or later extract from his kindness of heart.

That some objections existed to this mediatory plan, was true enough : those objections related to Isora rather than to myself, and she was the first,

on my hinting at the proposal, to overcome its difficulties. The leading feature in Isora's character was generosity ; and, in truth, I know not a more dangerous quality, either to man or woman. Herself was invariably the last human being whom she seemed to consider : and no sooner did she ascertain what measure was the most prudent for me to adopt, than it immediately became that upon which she insisted. Would it have been possible for me—man of pleasure and of the world as I was thought to be—no, my good uncle, though it went to my heart to wound thee so secretly—it would *not* have been possible for me, even if I had not coined my whole nature into love ; even if Isora had not been to me, what one smile of Isora's really was—it would not have been possible to have sacrificed so noble and so divine a heart, and made myself, in that sacrifice, a wretch for ever. No, my good uncle, I could not have made that surrender to thy reason, much less to thy prejudices. But if I have not done great injustice to the knight's character ; I doubt whether even the youngest reader will not forgive him for a want of sympathy with one

feeling, when they consider how susceptible that charming old man was to all others.

And herewith I could discourse most excellent wisdom upon that most mysterious passion of love. I could shew, by tracing its causes, and its inseparable connexion with the imagination, that it is only in certain states of society, as well as in certain periods of life, that love—real, pure, high love can be born. Yea, I could prove to the nicety of a very problem, that in the court of Charles II., it would have been as impossible for such a feeling to find root, as it would be for myrtle trees to effloresce from a Duvillier perrwig. And we are not to expect a man, however tender and affectionate he may be, to sympathize with that sentiment in another, which, from the accidents of birth and position, nothing short of a miracle could ever have produced in himself.

We were married then in private by a catholic priest. St. John, and one old lady who had been my father's godmother—for I wished for a female assistant in the ceremony, and this old lady could tell no secrets, for being excessively deaf, no body

ever talked to her, and indeed she scarcely ever went abroad—were the sole witnesses. I took a small house in the immediate neighbourhood of London; it was surrounded on all sides with a high wall which defied alike curiosity and attack. This was, indeed, the sole reason which had induced me to prefer it to many more gaudy or more graceful dwellings. But within, I had furnished it with every luxury that wealth, the most lavish and unsparing, could procure. Thither, under an assumed name, I brought my bride, and there was the greater part of my time spent. The people I had placed in the house believed I was a rich merchant, and this accounted for my frequent absences—(absences which Prudence rendered necessary) for the wealth which I lavished, and for the precautions of bolt, bar, and wall, which they imagined the result of commercial caution.

O! the intoxication of that sweet Elysium, that Tadmor in life's desert—the possession of the one whom we have first loved! It is as if poetry, and music, and light, and the fresh breath of flowers, were all blent into one being, and from that being rose our existence! *It is content made rapture—*

nothing to wish for, yet every thing to feel ! Was that air—the air which I had breathed hitherto ? that earth—the earth which I had hitherto beheld ? No, my heart dwelt in a new world, and all these motley and restless senses were melted into one sense—deep, silent, fathomless delight !

Well, too much of this species of love is not fit for a worldly tale, and I will turn, for the reader's relief, to worldly affections. From my first re-union with Isora, I had avoided all the former objects and acquaintances in which my time had been so charmingly employed. Tarleton was the first to suffer by my new pursuit ; “ What has altered you ? ” said he ; “ you drink not, neither do you play. The women say you are grown duller than a Norfolk parson, and neither the Puppet-Show, nor the Water-Theatre, the Spring Gardens, nor the Ring, Wills's, nor the Kit-Cat, the Mulberry Garden, nor the New Exchange, witness any longer your homage and devotion.—What has come over you ?—speak ! ”

“ Apathy ! ”

“ Ah !—I understand—you are tired of these things—pish, man !—go down into the country,

the green fields will revive thee, and send thee back to London a new man ! One would indeed find the town intolerably dull, if the country were not, happily, a thousand times duller,—go to the country, Count, or I shall drop your friendship.”

“ Drop it !” said I, yawning, and Tarleton took pet, and did as I desired him. Now had I got rid of my friend as easily as I had found him,—a matter that would not have been so readily accomplished, had not Mr. Tarleton owed me certain monies, concerning which, from the moment he had “dropped my friendship,” good breeding effectually prevented his saying a single syllable to me ever after. There is no knowing the blessings of money until one has learnt to manage it properly.

So much, then, for the friend ; now for the mistress. Lady Hasselton had, as Tarleton hinted before, resolved to play me a trick of spite ; the reasons of our rupture really were, as I had stated to Tarleton, the mighty effects of little things. She lived in a sea of trifles, and she was desperately angry if her lover was not always sailing a pleasure boat in the same ocean. Now this was expecting too much from me, and after twisting our silken

strings of attachment into all manner of fantastic forms, we fell fairly out one evening and broke the little ligatures in two. No sooner had I quarrelled with Tarleton, than Lady Hasselton received him in my place, and a week afterwards I was favoured with an anonymous letter informing me of the violent passion which a certain *dame de la cour* had conceived for me, and requesting me to meet her at an appointed place. I looked twice over the letter and discovered in one corner of it, two *g's* peculiar to the calligraphy of Lady Hasselton, though the rest of the letter, (bad spelling excepted) was pretty decently disguised. Mr. Fielding was with me at the time; "What disturbs you?" said he, adjusting his knee buckles.

"Read it!" said I, handing him the letter.

"Body of me, you are a lucky dog!" cried the beau. "You will hasten thither on the wings of love."

"Not a whit of it," said I; "I suspect that it comes from a rich old widow, whom I hate mortally."

"A rich old widow!" repeated Mr. Fielding, to whose eyes there was something very piquant

in a jointure, and who thought consequently that they were few virginal equal to a widow's flowers weeds. "A rich old widow—you are right, Count, you are right. Don't go, don't think of it. I cannot abide those depraved creatures. Widow, indeed—quite an affront to your gallantry."

"Very true," said I. "Suppose you supply my place?"

"I'd sooner be shot first," said Mr. Fielding, taking his departure, and begging me for the letter to wrap some sugar plums in.

Need I add, that Mr. Fielding repaired to the place of assignation, where he received, in the shape of a hearty drubbing, the kind favours intended for me? The story was now left for me to tell, not for the Lady Hasselton—and that makes all the difference in the manner a story is told—*me narrante*, it is *de te fabula narratur*—*te narrante*, and it is *de me fabula*, &c. Poor Lady Hasselton! to be laughed at, and have Tarleton for a lover. *Quelle miserable!*

I have gone back somewhat in the progress of my history, in order to make the above honourable mention of my friend and my mistress, thinking

it due to their own merits, and thinking it may also be instructive to young gentlemen who have not yet seen the world, to testify the exact nature and the probable duration of all the loves and friendships they are likely to find in that Great Monmouth Street of glittering and of damaged affections ! I now resume the order of narration.

I wrote to Aubrey, thanking him for his intercession, but concealing, till we met, the measure I had adopted. I wrote also to my uncle, assuring him that I would take an early opportunity of hastening to Devereux Court, and conversing with him on the subject of his letter. And after an interval of some weeks, I received the two following answers from my correspondents ; the latter arrived several days after the former.

From Aubrey Devereux.

“ I am glad to understand from your letter, un-
explanatory as it is, that you have followed my
advice. I will shortly write to you more at large :
at present I am on the eve of my departure for the

North of England, and have merely time to assure you of my affection.

“ AUBREY DEVEREUX.

P.S. “Gerald is in London—have you seen him? O this world! this world! how it clings to us, despite our education—our wishes, our conscience, our knowledge of the dread hereafter!”

Letter from Sir Wm. Devereux.

“ MY DEAR NEPHEW,

“Thank thee for thy letter, and the new plays thou sentest me down, and that droll new paper, the Spectator; it is a pretty shallow thing enough, —though it is not so racy as Rochester, or little Sid would have made it; but I thank thee for it, because it shows thou wast not angry with thine old uncle for opposing thee on thy love whimsies (on which most young men are dreadfully obstinate), since thou didst provide so kindly for his amusement. Well, but, Morton, I hope thou hast got that crotchet clear out of thy mind, and prithe now *don't* talk of it when thou comest down

to see me. I hate conversations on marriage more than a boy does flogging—od'sfish, I do. So you must humour me on that point.

“Aubrey has left me again, and I am quite alone—not that I was much better off when he was here, for he was wont, of late, to shun my poor room like a ‘lazar house,’ and when I spoke to his mother about it, she muttered something about ‘example,’ and ‘corrupting.’ ‘Sdeath, Morton, is your old uncle, who loves all living things, down to poor Ponto the dog, the sort of man whose example corrupts youth? As for thy mother, she grows more solitary every day; and I don’t know how it is, but I am not so fond of strange faces as I used to be. ‘Tis a new thing for me to be avoided and alone. Why, I remember even little Sid, who had as much venom as most men, once said it was impossible to—Fie now—see if I was not going to preach a sermon from a text in favour of myself. But come, Morton, come, I long for your face again; it is not so soft as Aubrey’s, nor so regular as Gerald’s, but it is twice as kind as either. Come, before it is too late; I feel myself going; and, to tell thee a secret, the doctors

tell me I may not last many months longer. Come, and laugh once more at the old knight's stories. Come, and shew him that there is still some one not too good to love him. Come, and I will tell thee a famous thing of old Rowly, which I am too ill and too sad to tell thee now.

“ W^M. DEVEREUX.”

Need I say, that upon receiving this letter, I resolved, without any delay, to set out for Devereux Court? I summoned Desmarais to me; he answered not my call; he was from home—an unfrequent occurrence with the necessitarian valet. I waited his return, which was not for some hours, in order to give him sundry orders for my departure. The exquisite Desmarais hemmed thrice—“ Will Monsieur be so very kind as to excuse my accompanying him?” said he, with his usual air and tone of obsequious respect.

“ And why?” The valet explained. A relation of his was in England only for a few days—the philosopher was most anxious to enjoy his society—a pleasure which fate might not again allow him.

Though I had grown accustomed to the man's services, and did not like to lose him even for a time, yet I could not refuse his request; and I therefore ordered my groom of the chambers to supply his place. This change, however, determined me on a plan which I had before meditated, viz. the conveying of my own person to Devereux Court on horseback, and sending my servant with my luggage in my post-chaise. The equestrian mode of travelling is, indeed, to this day, the one most pleasing to me; and the reader will find me pursuing it many years afterwards, and to the same spot.

I might as well observe here, that I had never entrusted Desmarais, no, nor one of my own servants, with the secret of my marriage with, or my visits to Isora. I am a very fastidious person on those matters, and of all confidants, even in the most trifling affairs, I do most eschew those base, lie-coining, grasping, selfish, alley-souled animals, by whom we have the miserable honour to be served. Even Desmarais, whose air was that of a nobleman, and whose intellect was that of a scholar, was ruined in my eyes by his profession.

There is altogether something so debasing, so demoralizing in that same profession, that if I wanted any thing to convince me of the necessity there is for a reform in the various constitutions of society, it would be the relation between master and servant.

In order, then, to avoid having my horse brought me to Isora's house by any of these menial spies, I took the steed which I had selected for my journey, and rode to Isora's, with the intention of spending the evening there, and commencing my excursion from thence with the morning light.

CHAPTER II.

Love—Parting—a Death Bed. After all, Human Nature is a beautiful Fabric; and even its Imperfections are not odious to him who has studied the Science of its Architecture, and formed a reverent Estimate of its Creator.

It is a noticeable thing how much fear increases love. I mean—for the aphorism requires explanation—how much we love, in proportion to our fear of losing (or even to our fear of injury done to) the beloved object. 'Tis an instance of the reaction of the feelings—the love produces the fear, and the fear reproduces the love. This is one reason, among many, why women love so much more tenderly and anxiously than we do; and it is also one reason among many, why frequent ab-

sences are, in all stages of love, the most keen excitors of the passion. I never breathed, away from Isora, without trembling for her safety. I trembled lest this Barnard, if so I should still continue to call her persecutor, should again discover and again molest her. Whenever, (and that was almost daily) I rode to the quiet and remote dwelling I had procured her, my heart beat so vehemently, and my agitation was so intense, that on arriving at the gate I have frequently been unable, for several minutes, to demand admittance. There was, therefore, in the mysterious danger which ever seemed to hang over Isora, a perpetual irritation to a love otherwise but little inclined to slumber; and this constant excitement took away from the torpor into which domestic affection generally languishes, and increased my passion even while it diminished my happiness.

On my arrival now at Isora's, I found her already stationed at the window, watching for my coming. How her dark eyes lit into lustre when they saw me! How the rich blood mantled up under the soft cheek which feeling had refined of late into a paler hue, than it was wont, when I

first gazed upon it, to wear ! Then how fled her light step to meet me ! How trembled her low voice to welcome me ! How spake, from every gesture of her graceful and modelled form, the anxious, joyful, all-animating gladness of her heart ! It is a melancholy pleasure to the dry, harsh, after-thoughts of later life, to think one has been thus loved ; and one marvels, when one considers what one is now, how it could have ever been ! That love *of ours* was never made for after years ! It could never have flowed into the common, and cold channel of ordinary affairs ! It could never have been mingled with the petty cares and the low objects with which the loves of all who live long together in this sordid and most earthly earth, are sooner or later blended ! We could not have spared to others an atom of the great wealth of our affection. We were misers of every coin in that exhaustless treasury. It would have pierced me to the soul to have seen Isora smile upon another. I know not even, had we had children, if I should not have been jealous of my child ! Was this selfish love ? yes, it was intensely, wholly selfish ; but it was a love made so only by

its excess ; nothing selfish on a smaller scale polluted it. There was not on earth that which the one would not have forfeited at the lightest desire of the other. So utterly were happiness and Isora entwined together, that I could form no momentary idea of the former, with which the latter was not connected. Was this love made for the many and miry roads through which man must travel ? Was it made for age, or worse than age, for that middle, cool, ambitious, scheming period of life, in which all the luxuriance and verdure of things are pared into tame shapes that mimic life, but a life that is estranged from nature, in which art is the only beauty, and regularity the only grace ? No, in my heart of hearts, I feel that our love was not meant for the stages of life through which I have already passed ; it would have made us miserable to see it fritter itself away, and to remember what it once was. Better as it is ! better to mourn over the green bough than to look upon the sapless stem. You who now glance over these pages, are you a mother ? if so, answer me one question—Would you not rather that the child whom you have cherished with your soul's care,

whom you have nurtured at your bosom, whose young joys your eyes have sparkled to behold, whose lightest grief you have wept to witness, as you would have wept not for your own; over whose pure and unvexed sleep you have watched and prayed, and as it lay before you thus still and unconscious of your vigil, have shaped out, oh, such bright hopes for its future lot; would you not rather that, while thus young and innocent, not a care tasted, not a crime incurred, it went down at once into the dark grave? Would you not rather suffer this grief, bitter though it be, than watch the predestined victim grow and ripen, and wind itself more and more around your heart, and when it is of full and mature age, and you yourself are stricken by years, and can form no new ties to replace the old that are severed, when woes have already bowed the darling of your hope, whom woe never was to touch, when sins have already darkened the bright, seraph, unclouded heart which sin never was to dim, behold it sink day by day altered, diseased, decayed, into the tomb which its childhood had in vain escaped? Answer me : would not the earlier fate be far

gentler than the last? And if you *have* known and wept over that early tomb—if you have seen the infant flower fade away from the green soil of your affections—if you have missed the bounding step, and the laughing eye, and the winning mirth which made this sterile world a perpetual holiday—Mother of the Lost, if you have known, and you still pine for these, answer me yet again—Is it not a comfort, even while you mourn, to think of all that that breast, now so silent, has escaped? The cream, the sparkle, the elixir of life, it had already quaffed; is it not sweet to think it shunned the wormwood and the dregs? Answer me, even though the answer be in tears! Mourner, your child was to you what my early and only love was to me; and could you pierce down, down through a thousand fathom of ebbing thought, to the far depths of my heart, you would there behold a sorrow *and a consolation*, that have something in unison with your own.

When the light of the next morning broke into our room, Isora was still sleeping. Have you ever observed, that the young, seen asleep and by the morning light, seem much younger even

than they are? partly because the air and the light sleep of dawn, bring a fresher bloom to the cheek, and partly, because the careless negligence and the graceful postures exclusively appropriated to youth, are forbidden by custom and formality through the day, and developing themselves unconsciously in sleep, they strike the eye like the ease and freedom of childhood itself. The last of the above reasons is not clear,—I do not seek to clothe it in better words, for it is not fully bodied forth to myself. But as I looked upon Isora's tranquil and most youthful beauty, over which there circled and breathed an ineffable innocence—even as the finer and subtler air, which was imagined by those dreamy bards who kindled the soft creations of naiad and of nymph, to float around a goddess—I could not believe that aught evil awaited one for whom infancy itself seemed to linger,—linger as if no elder shape and less delicate hue were meet to be the garment of so much guilelessness and tenderness of heart. I felt, indeed, while I bent over her, and her regular and quiet breath came upon my cheek, that feeling which is exactly the reverse to a presentiment of ill. I felt as if, secure in her

own purity, she had nothing to dread, so that even the pang of parting was lost in the confidence which stole over me as I then gazed.

I rose gently, went to the next room and dressed myself—I heard my horse neighing beneath, as the servant walked him lazily to and fro. I re-entered the bed-chamber, in order to take leave of Isora; she was already up. “What!” said I, “it is but three minutes since I left you asleep, and I stole away as gently as time does when with you.”

“Ah!” said Isora, smiling and blushing too, “but for my part, I think there is an instinct to know, even if all the senses were shut up, whether the one we love is with us or not. The moment you left me, I felt it at once, even in sleep, and I woke. But you will not, no, you will not leave me yet!”

I think I see Isora now, as she stood by the window which she had opened, with a woman’s minute anxiety, to survey even the aspect of the clouds, and beseech caution against the treachery of the skies. I think I see her now, as she stood the moment after I had torn myself from her

embrace, and had looked back, as I reached the door, for one parting glance—her eyes all tenderness, her lips parted, and quivering with the attempt to smile—the long, glossy ringlets (through whose raven hue, the *purpureum lumen* broke like an imprisoned sunbeam,) straying in dishevelled beauty over her transparent neck; the throat bent in mute despondency; the head drooping; the arms half extended, and dropping gradually as my steps departed; the sunken, absorbed expression of face, form, and gesture. so steeped in the very bitterness of dejection—all are before me now, sorrowful, and lovely in sorrow, as they were beheld years ago, by the grey, cold, comfortless light of morning.

“God bless you—my own, own love,” I said; and as my look lingered, I added, with a full but an assured heart; “and he will!” I tarried no more—I flung myself on my horse, and rode on as if I were speeding *to*, and not *from* my bride.

The noon was far advanced, as the day after I left Isora, I found myself entering the park in which Devereux Court is situated. I did not enter by one of the lodges, but through a private

gate. My horse was thoroughly jaded ; for the distance I had come was great, and I had ridden rapidly ; and as I entered the park, I dismounted, and throwing the rein over my arm, proceeded slowly on foot. I was passing through a thick, long plantation, which belted the park, and in which several walks and rides had been cut, when a man crossed the same road which I took, at a little distance before me. He was looking on the ground, and appeared wrapt in such earnest meditation, that he neither saw nor heard me. But I had seen enough of him in that brief space of time, to feel convinced that it was Montreuil whom I beheld. What brought him hither, him, whom I believed in London, immersed with Gerald in political schemes, and for whom these woods were not only interdicted ground, but must also have been but a tame field of interest, after his audiences with ministers and nobles ? I did not, however, pause to consider on his apparition ; I rather quickened my pace towards the house, in the expectation of there ascertaining the cause of his visit.

The great gates of the outer court were open

as usual : I rode unheedingly through them, and was soon at the door of the hall. The porter, who unfolded to my summons the ponderous door, uttered, when he saw me, an exclamation that seemed to my ear to have in it more of sorrow than welcome.

“ How is your master ? ” I asked.

The man shook his head, but did not hasten to answer : and impressed with a vague alarm, I hurried on without repeating the question. On the staircase I met old Nicholls, my uncle’s valet : I stopped and questioned him. My uncle had been seized on the preceding day with the gout in his stomach, medical aid had been procured, but it was feared ineffectually, and the physicians had declared, about an hour before I arrived, that he could not, in human probability, outlive the night. Stifling the rising at my heart, I waited to hear no more—I flew up the stairs—I was at the door of my uncle’s chamber—I stopped there, and listened ; all was still—I opened the door gently—I stole in, and creeping to the bed-side, knelt down and covered my face with my hands ; for I required a pause for self-possession, before I had courage to

look up. When I raised my eyes, I saw my mother on the opposite side ; she sat on a chair with a draught of medicine in one hand, and a watch in the other. She caught my eye, but did not speak ; she gave me a sign of recognition, and looked down again upon the watch. My uncle's back was turned to me, and he lay so still, that for some moments I thought he was asleep ; at last, however, he moved restlessly.

“ It is past noon !” said he to my mother, “ is it not ?”

“ It is three minutes and six seconds after four,” replied my mother, looking closer at the watch.

My uncle sighed. “ They have sent an express for the dear boy, Madam ?” said he.

“ Exactly at half-past nine last evening,” answered my mother, glancing at me.

“ He could scarce be here by this time,” said my uncle, and he moved again in the bed. “ Pish—how the pillow frets one.”

“ Is it too high ?” said my mother.

“ No,” said my uncle, faintly, “ no—no—the discomfort is not in the pillow, after all—’tis a fine day—is it not ?”

“ Very !” said my mother ; “ I wish you could go out.”

My uncle did not answer : there was a pause.
“ Od’sfish, Madam, are those carriage wheels ?”

“ No, Sir William—but—”

“ There *are* sounds in my ear—my senses grow dim,” said my uncle, unheeding her,—“ would that I might live another day—I should not like to die without seeing him. ’Sdeath, Madam, I do hear something behind !—Sobs, as I live !—Who sobs for the old knight ?” and my uncle turned round, and saw me.

“ My dear—dear uncle !” I said, and could say no more.

“ Ah, Morton ” cried the kind old man, putting his hand affectionately upon mine.—“ Beshrew me, but I think I have conquered the grim enemy now that you are come. But what’s this, my boy ?—tears—tears,—why little Sid—no, nor Rochester either, would ever have believed this if I had sworn it ! Cheer up—cheer up.”

But seeing that I wept and sobbed the more, my uncle, after a pause, continued in the somewhat figurative strain which the reader has observed he

sometimes adopted, and which perhaps his dramatic studies had taught him.

“Nay, Morton, what do you grieve for?—that Age should throw off its fardel of aches and pains, and no longer groan along its weary road, meeting cold looks and unwilling welcomes, as both host and comrade grow weary of the same face, and the spendthrift heart has no longer quip or smile wherewith to pay the reckoning? No—no—let the poor pedlar shuffle off his dull pack, and fall asleep. But I am glad you are come: I would sooner have one of your kind looks at your uncle’s stale saws or jests, than all the long faces about me, saving only the presence of your mother;” and with his characteristic gallantry, my uncle turned courteously to her.

“Dear Sir William!” said she, “it is time you should take your draught; and then would it not be better that you should see the chaplain—he waits without.”

“Od’sfish,” said my uncle, turning again to me, “’tis the way with them all—when the body is past hope, comes the physician, and when the soul is past mending, comes the priest. No, Madam,

no, 'tis too late for either.—Thank ye, Morton, thank ye,” (as I started up—took the draught from my mother’s hand, and besought him to drink it) “ ’tis of no use ; but if it pleases thee, I must,”—and he drank the medicine.

My mother rose, and walked towards the door—it was ajar, and, as my eye followed her figure, I perceived, through the opening, the black garb of the chaplain.

“ Not yet,” said she, quietly ; “ wait.” And then gliding away, she seated herself by the window in silence, and told her beads.

My uncle continued :—“ They have been at me, Morton, as if I had been a pagan ; and I believe, in their hearts, they are not a little scandalised that I don’t try to win the next world, by trembling like an ague. Faith, now, I never could believe that Heaven was so partial to cowards ; nor can I think, Morton, that Salvation is like a soldier’s muster-roll, and that we may play the devil between hours, so that, at the last moment, we whip in, and answer to our names. Od’sfish, Morton, I could tell thee a tale of that ; but ’tis a long one,

and we have not time now. Well, well, for my part, I believe reverently and gratefully of God, and do not think He will be very wrath with our past enjoyment of life, if we have taken care that others should enjoy it too ; nor do I think, with thy good mother, and Aubrey dear child, that an idle word has the same weight in the Almighty's scales as a wicked deed."

"Blessed, blessed are they," I cried, through my tears, "on whose souls there is as little stain as there is on yours !"

"Faith, Morton, that's kindly said ; and thou knowest not how strangely it sounds, after their exhortations to repentance. I know I have had my faults, and walked on to our common goal in a very irregular line ; but I never wronged the living nor slandered the dead, nor ever shut my heart to the poor—'twere a burning sin if I had ; and I have loved all men and all things, and I never bore ill-will to a creature. Poor Ponto, Morton, thou wilt take care of poor Ponto, when I'm dead—nay, nay, don't take on so. Go, my child, go—compose thyself while I see the priest,

for 'twill please thy poor mother ; and though she thinks harshly of me now, I should not like her to do so to-morrow. Go, my dear boy, go."

I went from the room, and waited by the door, till the office of the priest was over. My mother then came out, and said Sir William had composed himself to sleep. While she was yet speaking, Gerald surprised me by his appearance. I learned that he had been in the house for the last three days, and when I heard this, I involuntarily accounted for the appearance of Montreuil. I saluted him distantly, and he returned my greeting with the like pride. He seemed, however, though in a less degree, to share in my emotions ; and my heart softened to him for it. Nevertheless we stood apart, and met not as brothers should have met by the death-bed of a mutual benefactor.

" Will you wait without ?" said my mother.

" No," answered I, " I will watch over him." So I stole in, with a light step, and seated myself by my uncle's bed-side. He was asleep, and his sleep was as hushed and quiet as an infant's. I looked upon his face, and saw a change had come over it, and was increasing sensibly ; but there was neither

harshness nor darkness in the change, awful as it was. The soul, so long nurtured on benevolence, could not, in parting, leave a rude stamp on the kindly clay which had seconded its impulses so well.

The evening had just set in, when my uncle woke; he turned very gently, and smiled when he saw me.

“It is late?” said he, and I observed, with a wrung heart, that his voice was fainter.

“No, Sir, not very,” said I.

“Late enough, my child: the warm sun has gone down; and ’tis a good time to close one’s eyes, when all without looks grey and chill: methinks it is easier to wish thee farewell, Morton, when I see thy face indistinctly. I am glad I shall not die in the day time. Give me thy hand, my child, and tell me that thou art not angry with thine old uncle for thwarting thee in that love business. I have heard tales of the girl, too, which make me glad, for thy sake, that it is all off, though I might not tell thee of them before. ’Tis very dark, Morton. I have had a pleasant sleep.—Od’sfish, I do not think a bad man would have slept so well.—The fire

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burns dim, Morton—it is very cold. Cover me up—double the counterpane over the legs, Morton. I remember once walking in the Mall—little Sid said ‘Devereux.’—It is colder and colder, Morton—raise the blankets more over the back.—‘Devereux,’ said little Sid—faith, Morton, ’tis ice now—where art thou?—is the fire out, that I can’t see thee? Remember thine old uncle, Morton—and—and—don’t forget poor—Ponto!—Bless thee, my child—bless you all!”

And my uncle died!

CHAPTER XIII.

A great Change of Prospects.

I SHUT myself up in the apartments prepared for me, (they were not those I had formerly occupied,) and refused all participation in my solitude, till, after an interval of some days, my mother came to summon me to the opening of the will. She was more moved than I had expected. “It is a pity,” said she, as we descended the stairs, “that Aubrey is not here, and that we should be so unacquainted with the exact place where he is likely to be, that I fear the letter I sent him may be long delayed, or, indeed, altogether miscarry.”

“ Is not the Abbé, here ?” said I, listlessly.

“ No !” answered my mother, “ to be sure not.”

“ He has *been* here,” said I, greatly surprised.

“ I certainly saw him on the day of my arrival.”

“ Impossible !” said my mother, in evident astonishment ; and seeing that, at all events, she was unacquainted with the circumstance, I said no more.

The will was to be read in the little room, where my uncle had been accustomed to sit. I felt it as a sacrilege to his memory to choose that spot for such an office, but I said nothing. Gerald and my mother, the lawyer, (a neighbouring attorney, named Oswald,) and myself, were the only persons present ;—Mr. Oswald hemmed thrice, and broke the seal. After a preliminary, strongly characteristic of the testator, he came to the disposition of the estates. I had never once, since my poor uncle’s death, thought upon the chances of his will—indeed, knowing myself so entirely his favourite, I could not, if I had thought upon them, have entertained a doubt as to their result. What then was my astonishment, when couched in terms of the strongest affection, the whole bulk of the pro-

perty was bequeathed to Gerald ;—to Aubrey the sum of forty, to myself that of twenty thousand, (a capital considerably less than the yearly income of my uncle's princely estates,) was allotted. Then followed a list of minor bequests,—to my mother an annuity of three thousand a year, with the privilege of apartments in the house during her life ; to each of the servants legacies sufficient to render them independent ; to a few friends, and distant connections of the family, tokens of the testator's remembrance,—even the horses to his carriage, and the dogs that fed from his menials' table, were not forgotten, but were to be set apart from work, and maintained in indolence during their remaining span of life. The will was concluded—I could not believe my senses : not a word was said as a reason for giving Gerald the priority.

I rose calmly enough. “Suffer me, Sir,” said I to the lawyer, “to satisfy my own eyes.” Mr. Oswald bowed, and placed the will in my hands. I glanced at Gerald as I took it : his countenance betrayed, or feigned, an astonishment equal to my own. With a jealous, searching, scrutinizing eye, I examined the words of the bequest ; I examined

especially (for I suspected that the names must have been exchanged) the place in which my name and Gerald's occurred. In vain: all was smooth and fair to the eye, not a vestige of possible erasure or alteration was visible. I looked next at the wording of the will: it was evidently my uncle's—no one could have feigned or imitated the peculiar turn of his expressions; and above all, many parts of the will, (the affectionate and personal parts) were in his own hand-writing.

“The date,” said I, “is, I perceive, of very recent period; the will is witnessed by two witnesses besides yourself. Who, and where are they?”

“Robert Lister, the first signature, my clerk, he is since dead, Sir.”

“Dead!” said I; “and the other witness, George Davis?”

“Is one of Sir William's tenants, and is below, Sir, in waiting.”

“Let him come up,” and a middle-sized, stout man, with a blunt, bold, open countenance, was admitted.

“Did you witness this will?” said I.

“I did, Sir!”

“And this is your hand-writing?” pointing to the scarcely legible scrawl.

“Yees, Sir,” said the man, scratching his head.

“I think it be, they are my *es*, and *G*, and *D*, sure enough.”

“And do you know the purport of the will you signed?”

“Sir?”

“I mean, do you know to whom Sir William—stop, Mr. Oswald—suffer the man to answer me—to whom Sir William left his property?”

“Noa, to be sure, Sir; the will was a woundy long one, and Maister Oswald there told me it was no use to read it over to me, but merely to sign, as a witness to Sir William’s hand-writing.”

“Enough: you may retire;” and George Davis vanished.

“Mr. Oswald,” said I, approaching the attorney, “I may wrong you, and, if so, I am sorry for it, but I suspect there has been foul practice in this deed. I have reason to be convinced that Sir

William Devereux could never have made this devise. I give you warning, Sir, that I shall bring the business immediately before a court of law, and that if guilty of what—ay, tremble, Sir—I suspect, you will answer for this deed at the foot of the gallows.”

I turned to Gerald, who rose while I was yet speaking. Before I could address him, he exclaimed, with evident and extreme agitation,

“ You cannot, Morton—you cannot—you dare not insinuate that I, your brother, have been base enough to forge, or to instigate the forgery of, this will ?”

Gerald’s agitation made me still less doubtful of his guilt.

“ The case, Sir,” I answered coldly, “ stands thus : my uncle could not have made this will—it is a devise that will seem incredible to all who knew aught of our domestic circumstances. Fraud has been practised, how I know not ! by whom I do know !”

“ Morton, Morton—this is insufferable—I cannot bear such charges, even from a brother.”

“Charges!—your conscience speaks, Sir—not I; no one benefits by this fraud but you: pardon me if I draw an inference from a fact.”

So saying, I turned on my heel, and abruptly left the apartment. I ascended the stairs which led to my own: there I found my servant preparing the paraphernalia in which that very evening I was to attend my uncle’s funeral. I gave him, with a calm and collected voice, the necessary instructions for following me to town immediately after that event, and then I passed on to the room where the deceased lay in state. The room was hung with black—the gorgeous pall, wrought with the proud heraldry of our line, lay over the coffin, and by the lights which made, in that old chamber, a more brilliant, yet more ghastly day, sat the hired watchers of the dead.

I bade them leave me, and kneeling down beside the coffin, I poured out the last expressions of my grief. I rose, and was retiring once more to my room, when I encountered Gerald.

“Morton,” said he, “I own to you, I myself am astounded by my uncle’s will. I do not come

to make you offers—you would not accept them—I do not come to vindicate myself,—it is beneath me : and we have never been as brothers, and we know not their language—but I *do* come to demand you to retract the dark and causeless suspicions you have vented against me, and also to assure you that if you have doubts of the authenticity of the will, so far from throwing obstacles in your way, I myself will join in the inquiries you institute, and the expences of the law.”

I felt some difficulty in curbing my indignation while Gerald thus spoke. I saw before me the persecutor of Isora—the fraudulent robber of my rights, and I heard this enemy speak to me of aiding in the inquiries which were to convict himself of the basest, if not the blackest of human crimes ; there was something too in the reserved and yet insolent tone of his voice, which reminding me as it did of our long aversion to each other, made my very blood creep with abhorrence. I turned away, that I might not break my oath to Isora, for I felt strongly tempted to do so ; and said in as calm an accent as I could command,

“The case will, I trust, require no king’s evidence; and, at least, I will not be beholden to the man whom my reason condemns, for any assistance in bringing upon himself the ultimate condemnation of the law.”

Gerald looked at me sternly: “Were you not my brother,” said he, in a low tone, “I would, for a charge so dishonouring my fair name, strike you dead at my feet.”

“It is a wonderful exertion of fraternal love,” I rejoined, with a scornful laugh, but an eye flashing with passions a thousand times more fierce than scorn, “that prevents your adding that last favour to those you have already bestowed on me.”

Gerald placed, with a muttered curse, his hand upon his sword; my own rapier was instantly half drawn, when, to save us from the great guilt of mortal contest against each other, steps were heard, and a number of the domestics charged with melancholy duties at the approaching rite, were seen lowly sweeping in black robes along the opposite gallery. Perhaps that interruption restored both of us to our senses, for we said, almost in the same

breath, and nearly in the same phrase, "This way of terminating strife is not for us;" and as Gerald spoke, he turned slowly away, descended the staircase, and disappeared.

The funeral took place at night: a numerous procession of the tenants and peasantry attended. My poor uncle! there was not a dry eye for thee, but those of thine own kindred. Tall, stately, erect in the power and majesty of his unrivalled form, stood Gerald, already assuming the dignity and lordship, which, to speak frankly, so well became him; my mother's face was turned from me, but her attitude proclaimed her utterly absorbed in prayer. As for myself, my heart seemed hardened: I could not enfeoff to the gaze of a hundred strangers, the emotions which I would have hidden from those whom I loved the most; wrapped in my cloak, with arms folded on my breast, and eyes bent to the ground, I leaned against one of the pillars of the chapel, apart, and apparently unmoved.

But when they were about to lower the body into the vault, a momentary weakness came over

me. I made an involuntary step forward, a single but deep groan of anguish broke from me, and then covering my face with my mantle, I resumed my former attitude, and all was still. The rite was over ; in many and broken groupes the spectators passed from the chapel : some to speculate on the future Lord, some to mourn over the late, and all to return the next morning to their wonted business, and let the glad sun teach them to forget the past, until for themselves the sun should be no more, and the forgetfulness eternal.

The hour was so late that I relinquished my intention of leaving the house that night : I ordered my horse to be in readiness at daybreak, and before I retired to rest, I went to my mother's apartments : she received me with more feeling than she had ever testified before.

“ Believe me, Morton,” said she, and she kissed my forehead ; “ believe me, I can fully enter into the feelings which you must naturally experience, on an event so contrary to your expectations. I cannot conceal from you how much I am surprised. Certainly Sir William never gave any of us cause to

suppose that he liked either of your brothers—Gerald less than Aubrey—so much as yourself; nor, poor man, was he in other things at all addicted to conceal his opinions.”

“It is true, my mother,” said I; “it is true. Have you not therefore some suspicions of the authenticity of the will?”

“Suspicious!” cried my mother. “No!—impossible!—suspicions of whom? You could not think Gerald so base, and who else had an interest in deception?—Besides, the signature is undoubtedly Sir William’s hand-writing, and the will was regularly witnessed; suspicions, Morton—no, impossible! Reflect too, how eccentric, and humoursome your uncle always was: suspicions!—no, impossible!”

“Such things have been, my mother, nor are they uncommon: men will hazard their souls, ay, and what to some is more precious still, their lives too—for the vile clay we call money. But enough of this now: the law—that great arbiter—that eater of the oyster, and divider of its shells—the law will decide between us,

and if against me, as I suppose, and fear the decision will be—why I must be a suitor to Fortune, instead of her commander. Give me your blessing, my dearest mother ; I cannot stay longer in this house: to-morrow I leave you.”

And my mother did bless me, and I fell upon her neck and clung to it. “Ah!” thought I, “this blessing is almost worth my uncle’s fortune.”

I returned to my room—there I saw on the table the case of the sword sent me by the French king. I had left it with my uncle, on my departure to town, and it had been found among his effects, and reclaimed by me. I took out the sword, and drew it from the scabbard.

“Come,” said I, and I kindled with a melancholy, yet a deep enthusiasm, as I looked along the blade, “come, my bright friend, with thee through this labyrinth which we call the world, will I carve my way ! Fairest and speediest of earth’s levellers, thou makest the path from the low valley to the steep hill, and shapest the soldier’s axe into the monarch’s sceptre ! The laurel and the fasces, and the curule car, and the emperor’s purple—what are these but thy play-

things, alternately thy scorn and thy reward ?
Founder of all Empires, propagator of all creeds,
thou leddest the Gaul and the Goth, and the gods
of Rome and Greece crumbled upon their altars !
Beneath thee, the fires of the Gheber waxed pale,
and on thy point the badge of the camel-driver
blazed like a sun over the startled east ! Eternal
arbiter, and unconquerable despot, while the pas-
sions of mankind exist ! Most solemn of hypo-
crites—circling blood with glory as with a halo, and
consecrating homicide and massacre with a hollow
name, which the parched throat of thy votary, in
the battle, and the agony, shouteth out with its
last breath ! Star of all human destinies ! I kneel
before thee, and invoke from thy bright astrology
an omen and a smile.”

CHAPTER IV.

An Episode—The Son of the Greatest Man who (one only excepted) ever rose to a Throne, but by no means of the Greatest Man (save one) who ever existed.

BEFORE sunrise the next morning, I had commenced my return to London. I had previously entrusted to the *locum tenens* of the sage Desmarais, the royal gift, and (singular conjunction !) poor Ponto, my uncle's dog. Here let me pause, as I shall have no other opportunity to mention him, to record the fate of the canine bequest. He accompanied me some years afterwards to France, and he died there in extreme age. I shed tears, as I saw the last relic of my poor uncle expire, and I was not

consoled even though he was buried in the garden of the gallant Villars, and immortalized by an epitaph from the pen of the courtly Chaulieu.

Leaving my horse to select his own pace, I surrendered myself to reflection upon the strange alteration that had taken place in my fortunes. There did not, in my own mind, rest a doubt but that some villainy had been practised with respect to the will. My uncle's constant and unvarying favour towards me; the unequivocal expressions he himself from time to time had dropped indicative of his future intentions on my behalf; the easy and natural manner in which he had seemed to consider, as a thing of course, my heritage and succession to his estates; all, coupled with the frank and kindly character of my uncle, so little disposed to raise hopes which he meant to disappoint, might alone have been sufficient to arouse my suspicions at a devise so contrary to all past experience of the testator. But when to these were linked the bold temper, and the daring intellect of my brother, joined to his personal hatred to myself; his close intimacy with Montreuil, whom I believed capable of the darkest

designs; the sudden and evidently concealed appearance of the latter on the day my uncle died; the agitation and paleness of the attorney; the enormous advantages accruing to Gerald, and to no one else, from the terms of the devise; when these were all united into one focus of evidence, they appeared to me to leave no doubt of the forgery of the testament, and the crime of Gerald. Nor was there any thing in my brother's bearing and manner calculated to abate my suspicions. His agitation was real; his surprise might have been feigned; his offer of assistance in investigation, was an unmeaning bravado; his conduct to myself testified his continued ill will towards me—an ill will which might possibly have instigated him in the fraud, scarcely less than the whispers of interest and cupidity.

But while this was the natural and indelible impression on my mind, I could not disguise from myself the extreme difficulty I should experience in resisting my brother's claim. As far as my utter want of all legal knowledge would allow me to decide, I could perceive nothing in the will

itself which would admit of a lawyer's successful cavil: my reasons for suspicion, so conclusive to myself, would seem nugatory to a judge. My uncle was known as a humourist; and prove that a man differs from others in one thing, and the world will believe that he differs from them in a thousand. His favour to me would be, in the popular eye, only an eccentricity, and the unlooked for disposition of his will, only a caprice. Possession, too, gave Gerald a proverbial vantage ground, which my whole life might be wasted in contesting; and his command of an immense wealth might, more than probably, exhaust my spirit by delay, and my fortune by expences. Precious prerogative of law to reverse the attribute of the Almighty! to fill the *rich* with good things, but to send the *poor* empty away! *In corruptissimâ republicâ plurimæ leges.* Legislation perplexed, is synonymous with crime unpunished. A reflection, by the way, I should never have made, if I had never had a lawsuit—sufferers are ever reformers.

Revolving, then, these anxious and displeasing thoughts, interrupted, at times, by regrets of a

purser and less selfish nature for the friend I had lost, and wandering, at others, to the brighter anticipations of rejoining Isora, and drinking from her eyes my comfort for the past, and my hope for the future, I continued, and concluded my day's travel.

The next day, on resuming my journey, and on feeling the time approach that would bring me to Isora, something like joy became the most prevalent feeling on my mind. So true it is, that misfortunes little affect us, so long as we have some ulterior object which, by arousing hope, steals us from affliction. Alas ! the pang of a moment becomes intolerable, when we know of nothing *beyond* the moment which it soothes us to anticipate. Happiness lives in the light of the future : —attack the Present—she defies you ! Darken the Future, and you destroy her.

It was a beautiful morning : through the vapours, which rolled slowly away beneath his beams, the sun broke gloriously forth ; and over wood and hill, and the low plains, which, covered with golden corn, stretched immediately before me, his smile lay in stillness, but in joy.

And ever from out the brake and the scattered copse, which at frequent intervals beset the road, the merry birds sent a fitful and glad music to mingle with the sweets and freshness of the air.

I had accomplished the greater part of my journey, and had entered into a more wooded and garden-like description of country, when I perceived an old man, in a kind of low chaise, vainly endeavouring to hold in a little, but spirited horse, which had taken alarm at some object on the road, and was running away with its driver. The age of the gentleman, and the lightness of the chaise, gave me some alarm for the safety of the driver ; so tying my own horse to a gate, lest the sound of his hoofs might only increase the speed and fear of the fugitive, I ran with a swift and noiseless step along the other side of the hedge, and coming out into the road, just before the pony's head, I succeeded in arresting him, at rather a critical spot and moment. The old gentleman very soon recovered his alarm ; and returning me many thanks for my interference, requested me to accompany him to his house, which he said was two or three miles distant.

Though I had no desire to be delayed in my journey, for the mere sake of seeing an old gentleman's house, I thought my new acquaintance's safety required me, at least, to offer to act as his charioteer till we reached his house. To my secret vexation at that time, though I afterwards thought the petty inconvenience was amply repaid by a conference with a very singular and once noted character, the offer was accepted. Surrendering my own steed to the care of a ragged boy, who promised to lead it with equal judgment and zeal, I entered the little car, and keeping a firm hand and constant eye on the reins, brought the offending quadruped into a very equable and sedate pace.

"Poor Pob," said the old gentleman, apostrophizing his horse; "poor Pob, like thy betters, thou knowest the weak hand from the strong; and when thou art not held in by power, thou wilt chafe against love; so that thou renewest in my mind the remembrance of its favourite maxim, viz., 'The only preventative to rebellion is restraint!'"

"Your observation, Sir," said I, rather struck

by this address, “ makes very little in favour of the more generous feelings by which we ought to be actuated. It is a base mind which always requires the bit and bridle.”

“ It is, Sir,” answered the old gentleman ; “ I allow it ; but though I have some love for human nature, I have no respect for it ; and while I pity its infirmities, I cannot but confess them.”

“ Methinks, Sir,” replied I, “ that you have uttered in that short speech more sound philosophy than I have heard for months. There is wisdom in not thinking too loftily of human clay, and benevolence in not judging it too harshly, and something, too, of magnanimity in this moderation ; for we seldom condemn mankind till they have hurt us, and when they have hurt us, we seldom do any thing but detest them for the injury.”

“ You speak shrewdly, Sir, for one so young,” returned the old man, looking hard at me ; “ and I will be sworn you have suffered some cares ; for we never begin to think, till we are a little afraid to hope.”

I sighed as I answered, “ There are some men,

I fancy, to whom constitution supplies the office of care: who, naturally melancholy, become easily addicted to reflection, and reflection is a soil which soon repays us for whatever trouble we bestow upon its culture."

"True, Sir!" said my companion—and there was a pause. The old gentleman resumed. "We are not far from my home now, (or rather my temporary residence, for my proper and general home is at Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire); and, as the day is scarcely half spent, I trust you will not object to partake of a hermit's fare. Nay, nay, no excuse: I assure you that I am not a gossip in general, or a liberal dispenser of invitations; and I think, if you refuse me now, you will hereafter regret it."

My curiosity was rather excited by this threat: and reflecting that my horse required a short rest, I subdued my impatience to return to town, and accepted the invitation. We came presently to a house of moderate size, and rather antique fashion. This, the old man informed me, was his present abode. A servant, almost as old as his master, came to the door, and giving his arm to my host,

led him, for he was rather lame and otherwise infirm, across a small hall into a long, low apartment. I followed.

A miniature, over the chimney-piece, of Oliver Cromwell, forcibly arrested my attention.

“It is the only portrait I ever saw,” said I, “of the Protector, which impresses on me the certainty of a likeness; that resolute, gloomy brow—that stubborn lip—that heavy, yet not stolid expression—all seem to warrant resemblance to that singular and fortunate man, to whom folly appears to have been as great an instrument of success as wisdom, and who rose to the supreme power, perhaps, no less from a pitiable fanaticism than an admirable genius. So true is it that great men often soar to their height, by qualities the least obvious to the spectator, and, (to stoop to a low comparison,) resemble that animal* in which a common ligament supplies the place and possesses the property of wings.”

The old man smiled very slightly, as I made this remark. “If this be true,” said he, with an impressive tone, “though we may wonder less at

* The flying squirrel.

the talents of the Protector, we must be more indulgent to his character, nor condemn him for insincerity, when at heart he himself was deceived."

"It is in that light," said I, "that I have always viewed his conduct. And though myself, by prejudice, a cavalier and a tory, I own that Cromwell (hypocrite as he is esteemed); appears to me as much to have exceeded his royal antagonist and victim, in the virtue of sincerity, as he did in the grandeur of his genius, and the profound consistency of his ambition."

"Sir," said my host, with a warmth that astonished me, "you seem to have known that man, so justly do you judge him. Yes," said he, after a pause, "yes, perhaps no one ever so varnished to his own breast his designs—no one so covetous of glory, was ever so duped by conscience—no one ever rose to such a height, through so few acts that seemed to himself worthy of remorse."

At this part of our conversation, the servant entering, announced dinner. We adjourned to another room, and partook of a homely yet not uninviting repast. When men are pleased with each

other, conversation soon gets beyond the ordinary surfaces of talk ; and an exchange of deeper opinions is speedily effected by what old Barnes,* quaintly enough terms, “ The Gentleman Usher of all Knowledge—Sermocination !”

It was a pretty, though small room, where we dined ; and I observed that in this apartment, as in the other into which I had been first ushered, there were several books scattered about, in that confusion and number, which shew that they have become to their owner, both the choicest luxury and the least dispensable necessary. So during dinner time, we talked principally upon books, and I observed that those which my host seemed to know the best, were of the elegant and poetical order of philosophers, who, more fascinating than deep, preach up the blessings of a solitude which is useless, and a content, which, deprived of passion, excitement, and energy, would, if it could ever exist, only be a dignified name for vegetation.

“ So,” said he, when the dinner being removed, we were left alone with that substitute for all

* In the Gerania.

society—wine! “so you are going to town: in four hours more you will be in that great focus of noise, falsehood, hollow joy, and real sorrow. Do you know that I have become so wedded to the country, that I cannot but consider all those who leave it for the turbulent city, in the same light, half wondering, half compassionating, as that in which the antients regarded the hardy adventurers who left the safe land and their happy homes, voluntarily to expose themselves in a frail vessel to the dangers of an uncertain sea. Here, when I look out on the green fields, and the blue sky, the quiet herds, basking in the sunshine, or scattered over the unpolluted plains, I cannot but exclaim with Pliny, ‘This is the true *Μουσικιον*!’ this is the source from whence flow inspiration to the mind and tranquillity to the heart! And in my love of nature—more confiding and constant than ever is the love we bear to women—I cry with the tender and sweet Tibullus—

“ ‘Ego composito securus acervo
Despiciam dites—despiciamque famem.’ ”

“These,” said I, “are the sentiments we all,

(perhaps the most restless of us the most passionately) at times experience. But there is in our hearts, some secret but irresistible principle, that impels us, as a rolling circle, onward, onward, in the great orbit of our destiny ; nor do we find a respite, until the wheels on which we move are broken—at the tomb.”

“ Yet,” said my host, “ the internal principle you speak of can be arrested before the grave : at least stilled and impeded. You will smile incredulously, perhaps, (for I see you do not know who I am,) when I tell you that I might once have been a monarch, and that obscurity seemed to me more enviable than empire ; I resigned the occasion : the tide of fortune rolled onward, and left me safe, but solitary and forsaken upon the dry land. If you wonder at my choice, you will wonder still more when I tell you that I have never repented it.”

Greatly surprised, and even startled, I heard my host make this strange avowal. “ Forgive me,” said I, “ but you have powerfully excited my interest ; dare I inquire from whose experience I am now deriving a lesson ?”

“Not yet,” said my host, smiling, “not till our conversation is over, and you have bid the old anchorite adieu, in all probability, for ever : you will then know that you have conversed with a man, perhaps more universally neglected and contemned than any of his contemporaries. Yes,” he continued, “yes, I resigned power and I got not praise for my moderation, but contempt for my folly ; no human being would believe that I could have relinquished that treasure through a disregard for its possession, which others would only have relinquished through an incapacity to retain it ; and that which, had they seen it recorded in an antient history, men would have regarded as the height of philosophy, they despised when acted under their eyes, as the extremest abasement of imbecility. Yet I compare my lot with that of the great man whom I was expected to equal in ambition, and to whose grandeur I might have succeeded ; and am convinced, that in this retreat I am more to be envied, than he in the plenitude of his power and the height of his renown ; yet is not happiness the aim of

wisdom? and if my choice is happier than his, is it not wiser?"

"Alas," thought I, "the wisest men seldom have the loftiest genius, and perhaps happiness is granted rather to mediocrity of mind than to that of circumstances;" but I did not give so uncourteous a reply to my host an audible utterance; on the contrary. "I do not doubt," said I, as I rose to depart, "the wisdom of a choice which has brought you self gratulation. And it has been said by a man both great and good, a man to whose mind was open the lore of the closet and the experience of courts—that in wisdom or in folly, 'the only difference between one man and another, is whether a man governs his passions or his passions him.' According to this rule, which indeed is a classic and a golden aphorism, Alexander on the throne of Persia, might have been an idiot to Diogenes in his tub. And now, Sir, in wishing you farewell, let me again crave your indulgence to my curiosity."

"Not yet, not yet," answered my host; and he led me once more into the other room. While they were preparing my horse we renewed our con-

versation. To the best of my recollection we talked about Plato ; but I had now become so impatient to rejoin Isora, that I did not accord to my worthy host the patient attention I had hitherto given him. When I took leave of him he blessed me, and placed a piece of paper in my hand ; “ Do not open this,” said he, “ till you are at least two miles from hence, your curiosity will then be satisfied. If ever you travel this road again, or if ever you pass by Cheshunt, pause and see if the old philosopher is dead. Adieu !”

And so we parted.

You may be sure that I had not passed the appointed distance of two miles very far, when I opened the paper and read the following words :—

“ Perhaps, young stranger, at some future period of a life, which I venture to foretel will be adventurous and eventful, it may afford you a matter for reflection, perhaps a resting-spot for a moral, to remember that you have seen, in old age and obscurity, the son of Him who shook an empire, avenged a people, and obtained a throne, only to be the victim of his own passions and the dupe of his own reason. I repeat now, the question I be-

fore put to you—was the fate of the great Protector, fairer than that of the despised and forgotten

“RICHARD CROMWELL?”

“So,” thought I, “it is indeed with the son of the greatest ruler England, or perhaps in modern times, Europe has ever produced, that I have held this conversation upon content. Yes, perhaps your fate *is* more to be envied than that of your illustrious father; but who *would* envy it more? Strange that while we pretend that happiness is the object of all desire, happiness is the last thing which we covet. Love, and wealth, and pleasure, and honour,—these are the roads which we take, so long, that, accustomed to the mere travel, we forget that it was first undertaken, not for the course, but the goal; and in the common infatuation which pervades all our race, we make the toil the meed, and in following the means forsake the end.”

I never saw my host again; very shortly afterwards he died:* and Fate, which had marked with

* Richard Cromwell died in 1712.—ED.

so strong a separation the lives of the father and the son, united in that death—as its greatest, so its only universal, blessing—the philosopher and the recluse with the warrior and the chief!

CHAPTER V.

In which the Hero shews Decision on more points than one—More of Isora's Character is developed.

To use the fine image in the *Arcadia*, it was “when the sun, like a noble heart, began to shew his greatest countenance in his lowest estate,” that I arrived at Isora's door. I had written to her once, to announce my uncle's death, and the day of my return; but I had not mentioned in my letter my reverse of fortunes: I reserved that communication till it could be softened by our meeting. I saw by the countenance of the servant who admitted me, that all was well; so I asked no question—I flew up the stairs—I broke into Isora's

chamber, and in an instant she was in my arms. Ah, Love, Love ! wherefore art thou so transitory a pilgrim on the earth—an evening cloud which hovers on our horizon, drinking the hues of the sun, that grows ominously brighter as it verges to the shadow and the night, and which, the moment that sun is set, wanders on in darkness or descends in tears !

“ And now, my bird of Paradise,” said I, as we sat alone in the apartment I had fitted up as the banqueting room, and on which, though small in its proportions, I had lavished all the love of luxury and of shew which made one of my most prevailing weaknesses, “ and now, how has time passed with you since we parted ? ”

“ Need you ask, Morton ? Ah, have you ever noted a poor dog deserted by its master, or rather not deserted, for that, you know, is not my case yet,” added Isora, playfully, “ but left at home while the master went abroad ? have you noted how restless the poor animal is—how it refuses all company and all comfort—how it goes a hundred times a day into the room which its master is wont mostly to inhabit—how it creeps into the sofa or

the chair which the same absent idler was accustomed to press—how it selects some article of his very clothing, and curls jealously around it, and hides and watches over it, as I have hid and watched over this glove, Morton? Have you ever noted that humble creature whose whole happiness is the smile of one being, when the smile was away?—then, Morton, you can tell how my time has passed during your absence.”

I answered Isora by endearments and by compliments. She turned away from the latter.

“Never call me those fine names, I implore you,” she whispered; “call me only by those pretty pet words by which I know you will never call any one else. Bee and bird are my names, and mine only; but beauty and angel are names you have given, or may give, to a hundred others! Promise me, then, to address me only in our own language.”

“I promise, and lo, the seal to the promise. But tell me, Isora, do you not love these rare scents that make an Araby of this unmellowed clime? Do you not love the profusion of light which reflects so dazzling a lustre on that soft cheek—and

those eyes which the antient romancer * must have dreamt of when he wrote so prettily of “ eyes that seemed a temple where love and beauty were married ? ” Does not yon fruit take a more tempting hue, bedded as it is in those golden leaves ? Does not sleep seem to hover with a downier wing over those sofas on which the limbs of a princess have been laid ? In a word, is there not in luxury and in pomp a spell which no gentler or wiser mind would disdain ? ”

“ It may be so ! ” said Isora, sighing ; “ but the splendour which surrounds us, chills and almost terrifies me. I think every proof of your wealth and rank, puts me farther from you ; then, too, I have some remembrance of the green sod, and the silver rill, and the trees upon which the young winds sing and play—and I own that it is with the country and not the town that all my ideas of luxury are wed.”

“ But the numerous attendants, the long row of liveried hirelings, through which you may pass, as

* Sir Philip Sydney, who, if we may judge by the number of quotations from his works scattered in this book, seems to have been an especial favourite with Count Devereux.—ED.

through a lane, the caparisoned steeds, the stately equipage, the jewelled tiara, the costly robe which matrons imitate and envy, the music, which lulls you to sleep, the lighted shew, the gorgeous stage ; —all these, the attributes or gifts of wealth, all these that you have the right to hope you will one day or other command, you will own are what you could very reluctantly forego ?”

“ Do you think so, Morton ? Ah, I wish you were of my humble temper : the more we limit and concentrate happiness, the more certain, I think, we are of securing it—they who widen the circle, encroach upon the boundaries of danger ; and they who freight their wealth upon a hundred vessels are more liable, Morton, are they not, to the peril of the winds and waves, than they who venture it only upon one ?”

“ Admirably reasoned, my little sophist ; but if the one ship sink ?”

“ Why, I would embark myself in it as well as my wealth, and should sink with it.”

“ Well, well, Isora, your philosophy will, perhaps, soon be put to the test. I will talk to you to-morrow of business.”

“ And why not to-night ?”

“ To-night, when I have just returned ! No, to-night I will only talk to you of love ! ”

As may be supposed, Isora was readily reconciled to my change of circumstances, and indeed that sum which seemed poverty to me, appeared positive wealth to her. But perhaps few men are by nature and inclination, more luxurious and costly than myself ; always accustomed to a profuse expenditure at my uncle's, I fell insensibly, and *con amore* on my *début* in London, into all the extravagancies of the age. Sir William, pleased, rather than discontented with my habits, especially as they were attended with some *éclat*, pressed upon me proofs of his generosity, which since I knew his wealth, and considered myself his heir, I did not scruple to accept, and at the time of my return to London after his death, I had not only spent to the full the princely allowance I had received from him, but was above half my whole fortune in debt. However, I had horses and equipages, jewels and plate, and I did not long wrestle with my pride, before I obtained the victory, and sent all my valuables to the hammer. They sold pretty well, all things considered, for I had a certain reputation in the world for taste and magnificence ; and

when I had received the product and paid my debts, I found that the whole balance in my favour, including, of course, my uncle's legacy, was £15,000.

It was no bad younger brother's portion, perhaps, but I was in no humour to be made a younger brother without a struggle. So I went to the lawyers; they looked at the will, considered the case, and took their fees. Then the honestest of them, with the coolest air in the world, told me to content myself with my legacy, for the cause was hopeless; the will was sufficient to exclude ten elder sons. I need not add that I left this lawyer with a very contemptible opinion of his understanding. I went to another, he told me the same thing, only in a different manner, and I thought him as great a fool as his fellow practitioner. At last I chanced upon a little brisk gentleman, with a quick eye and a sharp voice, who wore a wig that carried conviction in every curl; had an independent, upright mien, and such a logical, emphatic way of expressing himself that I was quite charmed with him. This gentleman scarce heard me out, before he assured me that I had a famous case of it, that he liked making quick

work, and proceeding with vigour, that he hated rogues, and delay which was the sign of a rogue, but not the necessary sign of law, that I was the most fortunate man imaginable in coming to him, and, in short, that I had nothing to do, but to commence proceedings, and leave all the rest to him. I was very soon talked into this proposal, and very soon embarked in the luxurious ocean of litigation.

Having settled this business so satisfactorily, I went to receive the condolence and sympathy of St. John. Notwithstanding the arduous occupations both of pleasure and of power, in which he was constantly engaged, he had found time to call upon me very often, and to express by letter great disappointment that I had neither received nor returned his visits. Touched by the phenomenon of so much kindness in a statesman, I paid him in return the only compliment in my power, viz. I asked his advice *with a view of taking it*.

“ Politics—politics, my dear Count,” said he, in answer to that request,—“ nothing like it ; I will get you a seat in the House by next week,—you are just of age, I think. Heavens ! a man like you, who has learning enough for a German professor—

assurance that would almost abash a Milesian—a very pretty choice of words, and a pointed way of consummating a jest—why, with you by my side, my dear Count, I will soon—”

“ St. John,” said I, interrupting him, “ you forget I am a Catholic !”

“ Ah, I did forget that,” replied St. John, slowly. “ Heaven help me, Count, but I am sorry your ancestors were not converted ; it was a pity they should bequeath you their religion without the estate to support it, for papacy has become a terrible tax to its followers.”

“ I wonder,” said I, “ whether the earth will ever be governed by Christians, not cavillers ; by followers of our Saviour, not by co-operators of the devil ; by men who obey the former, and ‘ love one another,’ not by men who walk about with the latter, (that roaring lion,) ‘ seeking whom they may devour.’ Intolerance makes us acquainted with strange nonsense, and folly is never so ludicrous as when associated with something sacred—it is then like Punch and his Wife in Powell’s puppet-show, *dancing in the Ark*. *Par exemple*, to tell those who differ from us that they are in a delusion,

and yet to persecute them for that delusion, is to equal the wisdom of our forefathers, who, we are told, in the *Dæmonologie* of the Scottish Solomon, ‘ burnt a whole monasterie of nunnes for being misled, not by men, but *dreames!* ’ ”

And being somewhat moved, I ran on for a long time in a very eloquent strain, upon the disadvantages of intolerance; which, I would have it, was a policy as familiar to Protestantism now as it had been to Popery in the dark ages: quite forgetting that it is not the vice of a peculiar sect, but of a ruling party.

St. John, who thought, or affected to think very differently from me on these subjects, shook his head gently, but with his usual good breeding deemed it rather too sore a subject for discussion.

“ I will tell you a discovery I have made,” said I.

“ And what is it ? ”

“ Listen : that man is wisest, who is happiest—granted. What does happiness consist in ? Power, wealth, popularity, and, above all, content ! Well then, no man ever obtains so much power, so much money, so much popularity, and, above all, such

thorough self-content as a fool ; a fool, therefore, (this is no paradox), is the wisest of men. Fools govern the world in purple—the wise laugh at them—but they laugh in rags. Fools thrive at court—fools thrive in state chambers—fools thrive in boudoirs—fools thrive in rich men's legacies. Who is so beloved as a fool ? Every man seeks him, laughs at him, and hugs him. Who is so secure in his own opinion—so high in complacency, as a fool ? *suâ virtute involvit*. Harkye, St. John, let us turn fools—they are the only potentates—the only philosophers of earth. Oh, motley, ‘ motley’s your only wear ! ’ ”

“ Ha ! ha ! ” laughed St. John ; and rising, he insisted upon carrying me with him to the rehearsal of a new play, in order, as he said, to dispel my spleen, and prepare me for ripe decision upon the plans to be adopted for bettering my fortune.

But, in good truth, nothing calculated to advance so comfortable and praiseworthy an end, seemed to present itself. My religion was an effectual bar to any hope of rising in the state. Europe now began to wear an aspect that promised universal peace, and the sword which I had so poetically

apostrophized, was not likely to be drawn upon any more glorious engagement, than a brawl with the Mohawks, any incautious noses appertaining to which fraternity, I was fully resolved to slit whenever they came conveniently in my way. To add to the unpromising state of my worldly circumstances, my uncle's death had removed the only legitimate barrier to the acknowledgment of my marriage with Isora, and it became due to her to proclaim and publish that event. Now, if there be any time in the world, when a man's friends look upon him most coldly, when they speak of his capacities of rising the most despondingly, when they are most inclined, in short, to set him down as a silly sort of fellow, whom it is no use inconveniencing oneself to assist, it is at that moment when he has made what the said friends are pleased to term an imprudent marriage! It was, therefore, no remarkable instance of good luck, that the express time for announcing that I had contracted that species of marriage, was the express time for my wanting the assistance of those kind-hearted friends. Then too, by the pleasing sympathies in worldly opinion, the neglect of one's

friends is always so damnably neighboured by the exultation of one's foes. Never was there a man who, without being very handsome, very rude, or very much in public life, had made unto himself more enemies than it had been my lot to make. How the rascals would all sneer and coin dull jests when they saw me so down in the world ! The very old maids, who, so long as they thought me single, would have declared that the will was a fraud, would, directly they heard I was married, ask if Gerald was handsome, and assert, with a wise look, that my uncle knew well what he was about. Then the joy of the Lady Hasselton, and the curled lip of the haughty Tarleton ! It is a very odd circumstance, but it is very true, that the people we most despise have the most influence over our actions : a man never ruins himself by giving dinners to his father, or turning his house into a palace in order to feast his bosom friend :—on the contrary, 'tis the poor devil of a friend who fares the worst, and starves on the family joint, while mine host beggars himself to banquet “ that disagreeable Mr. A., who is such an insufferable ass,” and mine hostess sends her husband

to the Fleet, by vieing with “that odious Mrs. B., who was always her aversion.”

Just in the same manner, no thought disturbed me in the step I was about to take, half so sorely as the recollection of Lady Hasselton the coquette, and Mr. Tarleton the gambler. However, I have said somewhere or other that nothing selfish on a small scale polluted my love for Isora—nor did there. I had resolved to render her speedy and full justice ; and if I sometimes recurred to the disadvantages to myself, I always had pleasure in thinking that they were *sacrifices* to her. But to my great surprise, when I first announced to Isora my intention of revealing our marriage, I perceived in her countenance, always such a traitor to her emotions, a very different expression from that which I had anticipated. A deadly paleness spread over her whole face, and a shudder seemed to creep through her frame. She attempted, however, to smile away the alarm she had created in me ; nor was I able to penetrate the cause of an emotion so unlooked for. But I continued to speak of the public announcement of our union, as of a

thing decided ; and at length she listened to me while I arranged the method of making it, and sympathised in the future projects I chalked out for us to adopt. Still, however, when I proposed a definite time for the re-celebration of our nuptials, she ever drew back, and hinted the wish for a longer delay.

“ Not so soon, dear Morton,” she would say tearfully, “ not so soon ; we are happy now, and perhaps when you are with me always, you will not love me so well !”

I reasoned against this notion, and this reluctance, but in vain ; and day passed on day, and even week on week, and our marriage was still undeclared. I now lived, however, almost wholly with Isora, for busy tongues could no longer carry my secret to my uncle ; and indeed, since I had lost the fortune which I was expected to inherit, it is astonishing how little people troubled their heads about my movements or myself. I lived then almost wholly with Isora—and did familiarity abate my love ? Strange to say, it did not abate even the romance of it. The reader may possibly remember a conversation

with St. John recorded in the Second Book of this history. "The deadliest foe to love," said he, (he who had known all love—that of the senses, and that also of the soul) "is not change, nor misfortune, nor jealousy, nor wrath, nor any thing that flows from passion, or emanates from fortune. The deadliest foe to it, is custom!"

Was St. John right?—I believe that in most instances he was; and perhaps the custom was not continued in my case long enough for me to refute the maxim. But as yet, the very gloss upon the god's wings was fresh as on the first day when I had acknowledged his power. Still was Isora to me the light and the music of existence!—still did my heart thrill and leap within me, when her silver and fond voice made the air a blessing. Still would I hang over her, when her beautiful features lay hushed in sleep, and watch the varying hues of her cheek; and fancy, while she slept, that in each low, sweet breath that my lips drew from hers, was a whisper of tenderness and endearment! Still when I was absent from her, my soul seemed to mourn a separation from its better and dearer

part, and the joyous senses of existence, saddened and shrunk into a single want ! Still was her presence to my heart as a breathing atmosphere of poesy which circled and tinted all human things ; still was my being filled with that delicious and vague melancholy which the very excess of rapture alone produces—the knowledge we dare not breathe to ourselves that the treasure in which our heart is stored, is not above the casualties of fate. The sigh that mingles with the kiss, the tear that glistens in the empassioned and yearning gaze, the deep tide in our spirit, over which the moon and the stars have power ; the chain of harmony within the thought, which has a mysterious link with all that is fair, and pure, and bright in Nature, knitting as it were loveliness with love !—all this, all that I cannot express—all that to the young for whom the real world has had few spells, and the world of vision has been a home, who love at last and for the first time, all that to them are known, were still mine.

In truth, Isora was one well calculated to sustain and to rivet romance. The cast of her beauty was

so dreamlike, and yet so varying—her temper was so little mingled with the common characteristics of woman; it had so little of caprice, so little of vanity, so utter an absence of all jealous, and all angry feeling; it was so made up of tenderness and devotion, and yet so imaginative and fairy-like in its fondness, that it was difficult to bear only the sentiments of earth, for one who had so little of earth's clay. She was more like the women whom one imagines are the creations of poetry, and yet of whom no poetry, save that of Shakspeare's, reminds us; and to this day, when I go into the world, I never see aught of our own kind which recalls her, or even one of her features, to my memory. But when I am alone with Nature, methinks a sweet sound, or a new-born flower, has something of familiar power over those stored and deep impressions which do make her image, and it brings her more vividly before my eyes, than any shape or face of her own sex, however beautiful it may be.

There was also another trait in her character, which, though arising in her weakness, not her virtues, yet perpetuated the more dreamlike and imaginary

qualities of our passion : this was a melancholy superstition, developing itself in forebodings and omens which interested, because they were steeped at once in the poetry and in the deep sincerity of her nature. She was impressed with a strong and uncontrollable feeling, that her fate was predestined to a dark course and an early end ; and she drew from all things around her, something to feed the pensive character of her thoughts. The stillness of noon—the holy and eloquent repose of twilight, its rosy sky, and its soft air, its shadows and its dews, had equally for her heart a whisper and a spell. The wan stars, where, from the eldest time, man has shaped out a chart of the undiscoverable future ; the mysterious moon, to which the great ocean ministers from its untrodden shrines ; the winds, which traverse the vast air, pilgrims from an eternal home to an unpenetrated bourne ; the illimitable Heavens, where none ever gazed without a vague craving for something that the earth cannot give, and a vague sense of a former existence, in which that something was enjoyed ; the holy night—that solemn and circling sleep, which seems, in its repose, to image our death, and in its

living worlds, to shadow forth the immortal realms which only through that death we can survey;—all had, for the deep heart of Isora, a language of omen and of doom. Often would we wander alone, and for hours together, by the quiet and wild woods and streams that surrounded her retreat, and which we both loved so well; and often, when the night closed over us, with my arm around her, and our lips so near, that our atmosphere was our mutual breath, would she utter, in that voice which “made the soul plant itself in the ears,”—the predictions which had nursed themselves at her heart.

I remember one evening, in especial! the rich twilight had gathered over us, and we sat by a slender and soft rivulet, overshadowed by some stunted yet aged trees. We had both, before she spoke, been silent for several minutes; and only when, at rare intervals, the birds sent from the copse that backed us a solitary and vesper note of music, was the stillness around us broken. Before us, on the opposite bank of the stream, lay a valley, in which shadow and wood concealed all trace of man’s dwellings, save at one far spot, where, from a

single hut, rose a curling and thin vapour,—like a spirit released from earth, and losing gradually its earthier particles, as it blends itself with the loftier atmosphere of Heaven.

It was then that Isora, clinging closer to me, whispered her forebodings of death. “ You will remember,” said she, smiling faintly, “ you will remember me, in the lofty and bright career which yet awaits you ; and I scarcely know whether I would not sooner have that memory—free as it will be from all recollection of my failings and faults, and all that I have cost you, than incur the chance of your future coldness or decrease of love.”

And when Isora turned, and saw that the tears stood in my eyes, she kissed them away, and said, after a pause,

“ It matters not, my own guardian angel, what becomes of me : and now that I am near you, it is wicked to let my folly cost you a single pang. But why should you grieve at my forebodings ? there is nothing painful or harsh in them to me, and I interpret them thus : ‘ if my life passes away before the common date, perhaps it will be a sacrifice to yours. And it will, Morton—it will.

The love I bear to you I can but feebly express now ; all of us wish to prove our feelings, and I would give one proof of mine for you. It seems to me that I was made only for one purpose—to love you ; and I would fain hope, that my death may be some sort of sacrifice to you—some token of the ruling passion and the whole object of my life.”

As Isora said this, the light of the moon, which had just risen, shone full upon her cheek, flushed as it was with a deeper tint than it usually wore ; and in her eye—her features—her forehead—the lofty nature of her love seemed to have stamped the divine expression of itself.

Have I lingered too long on these passages of life,—they draw near to a close—and a more adventurous and stirring period of manhood will succeed. Ah, little could they, who in after years beheld in me but the careless yet stern soldier—the wily and callous diplomatist—the companion alternately so light and so moodily reserved—little could they tell how soft, and weak, and doting, my heart was once !

CHAPTER VI.

An Unexpected Meeting—Conjecture and Anticipation.

THE day for the public solemnization of our marriage was at length appointed. In fact, the plan for the future that appeared to me most promising, was to proffer my services to some foreign court, and that of Russia held out to me the greatest temptation. I was therefore anxious, as soon as possible, to have an affair of such importance over, and I purposed leaving the country within a week afterwards. My little lawyer assured me that my suit would go on quite as well in my absence, and whenever my presence was necessary, he would be sure to inform me of it. I

did not doubt him in the least—it is a charming thing to have confidence in one's man of business.

Of Montreuil I now saw nothing ; but I accidentally heard that he was on a visit to Gerald, and that the latter had already made the old walls ring with premature hospitality. As for Aubrey, I was in perfect ignorance of his movements : and the unsatisfactory shortness of his last letter, and the wild expressions so breathing of fanaticism in the postscript, had given me frequent sensations of anxiety and alarm on his account. I longed above all to see him,—to talk with him over old times and our future plans, and to learn whether no new bias could be given to a temperament which seemed to lean so strongly towards a self-punishing superstition. It was about a week before the day fixed for my public nuptials, that I received at last from him the following letter :

“ MY DEAREST BROTHER,

“ I have been long absent from home—absent on affairs on which we will talk hereafter. I have not forgotten you though I have been silent, and the news of my poor uncle's death has shocked me

greatly. On my arrival here I learnt your disappointment and your recourse to law. I am not so much surprised, though I am as much grieved as yourself, for I will tell you now, what seemed to me unimportant before. On receiving your letter, requesting consent to your designed marriage, my uncle seemed greatly displeased as well as vexed, and afterwards he heard much that displeased him more; from what quarter came his news I know not, and he only spoke of it in inuendoes and angry insinuations. As far as I was able, I endeavoured to learn his meaning, but could not, and to my praises of you I thought latterly he seemed to lend but a cold ear; he told me at last, when I was about to leave him, that you had acted ungratefully to him, and that he should alter his will. I scarcely thought of this speech at the time, or rather I considered it as the threat of a momentary anger. Possibly, however, it was the prelude to that disposition of property which has so wounded you,—I observe too that the will bears date about that period. I mention this fact to you—you can draw from it what inference you

will ; but I do solemnly believe that Gerald is innocent of any fraud towards you.

“ I am all anxiety to hear whether your love continues. I beseech you to write to me instantly, and inform me on that head as on all others. We shall meet soon.

“ Your ever affectionate Brother,

“ AUBREY DEVEREUX.”

There was something in this letter that vexed and displeased me : I thought it breathed a tone of unkindness and indifference, which my present circumstances rendered peculiarly inexcusable. So far, therefore, from answering it immediately, I resolved not to reply to it till after the solemnization of my marriage. The anecdote of my uncle startled me a little when I coupled it with the words my uncle had used towards myself on his death-bed ; viz., in hinting that he had heard some things unfavourable to Isora, unnecessary then to repeat ; but still if my uncle had altered his intentions towards me, would he not have mentioned the change and its reasons ? Would he have written

to me with such kindness, or received me with such affection? I could not believe that he would: and my opinions of the fraud and the perpetrator, were not a whit changed by Aubrey's epistle. It was clear, however, that he had joined the party against me: and as my love for him was exceedingly great, I was much wounded by the idea.

"All leave me," said I, "upon this reverse,—all but Isora!" and I thought with renewed satisfaction on the step which was about to ensure to her a secure home and an honourable station. My fears lest Isora should again be molested by her persecutor, were now pretty well at rest: having no doubt in my own mind as to that persecutor's identity, I imagined that in his new acquisition of wealth and pomp, a boyish and unreturned love would easily be relinquished; and that, perhaps, he would scarcely regret my obtaining the prize himself had sought for, when in my altered fortunes it would be followed by such worldly depreciation. In short, I looked upon him as possessing a characteristic common to most bad men, who are never so influenced by love as they are by hatred; and imagined therefore, that if he had lost the object of the for-

mer, he could console himself by exulting over any decline of prosperity in the object of the latter.

As the appointed day drew near, Isora's despondency seemed to vanish, and she listened with her usual eagerness in whatever interested me to my continental schemes of enterprise. I resolved that our second wedding, though public, should be modest and unostentatious, suitable rather to our fortunes than our birth. St. John, and a few old friends of the family, constituted all the party I invited, and I requested them to keep my marriage secret until the very day for celebrating it arrived. I did this from a desire of avoiding compliments intended as sarcasms, and visits rather of curiosity, than friendship. On flew the days, and it was now the one preceding my wedding. I was dressing to go out upon a matter of business connected with the ceremony, and I then, as I received my hat from Desmarais, for the first time thought it requisite to acquaint that accomplished gentleman with the rite of the morrow. Too well bred was Monsieur Desmarais, to testify any other sentiment than pleasure at the news; and he received my orders and directions for the next day with more

than the graceful urbanity which made one always feel quite honoured by his attentions.

“And how goes on the philosophy?” said I,—
“faith, since I am about to be married, I shall be likely to require its consolations.”

“Indeed Monsieur,” answered Desmarais, with that expression of self-conceit which was so curiously interwoven with the obsequiousness of his address, “indeed, Monsieur, I have been so occupied of late in preparing a little powder very essential to dress, that I have not had time for any graver, though not perhaps more important, avocations.”

“Powder—and what is it?”

“Will Monsieur condescend to notice its effect?” answered Desmarais, producing a pair of gloves which were tinted of the most delicate flesh-colour; the colouring was so nice, that when the gloves were on, it would have been scarcely possible, at any distance, to distinguish them from the naked flesh.

“’Tis a rare invention,” said I.

“Monsieur is very good, but I flatter myself it is so,” rejoined Desmarais; and he forthwith ran

on far more earnestly on the merits of his powder, than I had ever heard him descant on the beauties of Fatalism. I cut him short in the midst of his harangue; too much eloquence in any line, is displeasing in one's dependant.

I had just concluded my business abroad, and was returning homeward with downcast eyes, and in a very abstracted mood, when I was suddenly startled by a loud voice that exclaimed in a tone of surprise: "What!—Count Devereux—how fortunate!"

I looked up, and saw a little dark man, shabbily dressed; his face did not seem unfamiliar to me, but I could not at first remember where I had seen it,—my look, I suppose, testified my want of memory, for he said, with a low bow,—

"You have forgotten me, Count, and I don't wonder at it; so please you, I am the person who once brought you a letter from France to Devereux Court."

At this, I recognised the bearer of that epistle, which had embroiled me with the Abbé Montreuil. I was too glad of the meeting to shew any coolness in my reception of the gentleman, and to speak

candidly, I never saw a gentleman less troubled with *mauvaise honte*.

“ Sir !” said he, lowering his voice to a whisper, “ it is most fortunate, that I should thus have met you ; I only came to town this morning, and for the sole purpose of seeking you out. I am charged with a packet, which I believe will be of the greatest importance to your interests. But,” he added, looking round, “ the streets are no proper place for my communication,—*parbleu* and *morbleu*, there are those about, who hear whispers through stone walls—suffer me to call upon you to-morrow.”

“ To-morrow ! it is a day of great business with me, but I can possibly spare you a few moments, if that will suffice ; or, on the day after, your own pleasure may be the sole limit of our interview.”

“ *Parbleu, Monsieur*, you are very obliging—very ; but I will tell you in one word who I am, and what is my business. My name is Marie Oswald : I was born in France, and I am the half-brother of that Oswald who drew up your uncle’s will.”

“Good Heavens !” I exclaimed, “is it possible that you know any thing of that affair ?”

“Hush—yes, all ! my poor brother is just dead ; and, in a word, I am charged with a packet given me by him on his death-bed. Now, will you see me if I bring it to-morrow ?”

“Certainly ; can I not see you to-night ?”

“To-night ?—No, not well—*parbleu* and *morbleu* ! I want a little consideration as to the reward due to me for my eminent services to your lordship. No : let it be to-morrow.”

“Well ! at what hour ? I fear it must be in the evening.”

“Seven, *s’il vous plait*, Monsieur.”

“Enough ! be it so.”

And Mr. Marie Oswald, who seemed, during the whole of this short conference, to have been under some great apprehension of being seen or overheard, bowed, and vanished in an instant, leaving my mind in a most motley state of incoherent, unsatisfactory, yet sanguine conjecture.

CHAPTER VII.

The Events of a Single Night—Moments make the Hues in which
Years are coloured.

MEN of the old age ! what wonder that in the fondness of a dim faith, and in the vague guesses which, from the frail ark of reason, we send to hover over a dark and unfathomable abyss, what wonder that ye should have wasted hope and life in striving to penetrate the future ! What wonder that ye should have given a language to the stars, and to the night a spell, and gleaned from the uncomprehended earth, an answer to the enig-

mas of Fate ! We are like the sleepers, who, walking under the influence of a dream, wander by the verge of a precipice, while in their own deluded vision, they perchance believe themselves surrounded by bowers of roses, and accompanied by those they love ; or, rather like the blind man, who can retrace every step of the path he has *once* trodden, but who can guess not a single inch of that which he has not yet travelled, our reason can re-guide us over the roads of past experience with a sure and unerring wisdom, even while it recoils, baffled and bewildered, before the blackness of the very moment whose boundaries we are about to enter.

The few friends I had invited to my wedding were still with me, when one of my servants, not Desmarais, informed me that Mr. Oswald waited for me. I went out to him.

“ *Parbleu !*” said he, rubbing his hands, “ I perceive it is a joyous time with you, and I don’t wonder you can only spare me a few moments.”

The estates of Devereux were not to be risked for a trifle, but I thought Mr. *Marie Oswald*

exceedingly impertinent. “Sir,” said I, very gravely, “pray be seated: and now to business. In the first place, may I ask to whom I am beholden for sending you with that letter you gave me at Devereux Court? and secondly, what that letter contained?—for I never read it.”

“Sir,” answered the man, “the history of the letter is perfectly distinct from that of the will, and the former (to discuss the least important first) is briefly this. You have heard, Sir, of the quarrels between Jesuit and Jansenist?”

“I have.”

“Well—but first, Count, let me speak of myself. There were three young men of the same age, born in the same village in France, of obscure birth each, and each desirous of getting on in the world. Two were deuced clever fellows: the third nothing particular. One of the two at present shall be nameless; the third, ‘who was nothing particular,’ (in his own opinion, at least, though his friends may think differently,) was Marie Oswald. We soon separated: I went to Paris, was employed in different occupations, and at

last became secretary, and (why should I disavow it ?) valet to a lady of quality, and a violent politician. She was a furious Jansenist ; of course I adopted her opinions. About this time, there was much talk among the Jesuits of the great genius and deep learning of a young member of the order—Julian Montreuil. Though not residing in the country, he had sent one or two books to France, which had been published, and had created a great sensation. Well, Sir, my mistress was the greatest intriguante of her party : she was very rich, and tolerably liberal ; and among other packets of which a messenger from England was *carefully* robbed, between Calais and Abbeville, (you understand me, Sir, *carefully* robbed : *par-bleu!* I wish I were robbed in the same manner every day in my life) was one from the said Julian Montreuil, to a political friend of his. Among other letters in this packet—all of importance—was one descriptive of the English family with whom he resided. It hit them all, I am told, off to a hair ; and it described, in particular, one, the supposed inheritor of the estates,

a certain Morton Count Devereux. Since you say you did not read the letter, I spare your blushes, Sir, and I don't dwell upon what he said of your talent, energy, ambition, &c. I will only tell you that he dilated far more upon your prospects than your powers; and that he expressly stated what was his object in staying in your family and cultivating your friendship—he expressly stated that £30,000 a year would be particularly serviceable to a certain political cause which he had strongly at heart.”

“ I understand you,” said I; “ the Chevalier's?”

“ Exactly. ‘ This sponge,’ said Montreuil, I remember the very phrase—‘ this sponge will be well filled, and I am handling it softly now, in order to squeeze its juices hereafter according to the uses of the party we have so strongly at heart.’ ”

“ It was not a metaphor very flattering to my understanding,” said I.

“ True, Sir. Well, as soon as my mistress learnt this, she remembered that your father, the

Marshal, had been one of her *plus chers amis*—in a word, if scandal says true, he had been *the cher ami*. However, she was instantly resolved to open your eyes, and ruin the *maudit Jesuite*: she enclosed the letter in an envelope, and sent me to England with it. I came—I gave it you—and I discovered in that moment, when the Abbé entered, that this Julian Montreuil was an old acquaintance of my own—was one of the two young men who I told you were such deuced clever fellows. Like many other adventurers, he had changed his name on entering the world, and I had never till now suspected that Julian Montreuil was Bertrand Collinot. Well, when I saw what I had done, I was exceedingly sorry, for I had liked my companion well enough not to wish to hurt him; besides, I was a little afraid of him. I took horse, and went about some other business I had to execute, nor did I visit that part of the country again, till a week ago, (now I come to the other business,) when I was summoned to the death-bed of my half-brother, the attorney, peace be with him! He suffered much from hypochondria in his dying moments—I believe

it is the way with people of his profession — and he gave me a sealed packet, with a last injunction to place it in your hands, and your hands only. Scarce was he dead—(do not think I am unfeeling, Sir, I had seen very little of him, and he was only my half-brother, my father having married, for a second wife, a foreign lady, who kept an inn, by whom he was blessed with myself)—scarce, I say, was he dead, when I hurried up to town; Providence threw you in my way, and you shall have the document upon two conditions.”

“ Which are, first to reward you; secondly, to ——”

“ To promise you will not open the packet for seven days.”

“ The devil! and why?”

“ I will tell you candidly:—one of the papers in the packet, I believe to be my brother’s written confession—nay, I know it is—and it will criminate one I have a love for, and who, I am resolved, shall have a chance of escape.”

“ Who is that one? Montreuil?”

“ No—I do not refer to him; but I cannot

tell you more. I require the promise, Count—it is indispensable. If you don't give it me, *parbleu* and *morbleu*, you shall not have the packet."

There was something so cool, so confident, and so impudent about this man, that I did not well know whether to give way to laughter or to indignation. Neither, however, would have been politic in my situation; and, as I said before, the estates of Devereux were not to be risked for a trifle.

"Pray," said I, however, with a shrewdness which I think did me credit—"pray, Mr. Marie Oswald, do you expect the reward before the packet is opened?"

"By no means," answered the gentleman, who in his own opinion was nothing particular; "by no means; nor until you or your lawyers are satisfied that the papers enclosed in the packet are sufficient fully to restore you to the heritage of Devereux Court and its demesnes."

There was something fair in this; and as the only penalty, to me, incurred by the stipulated condition, seemed to be the granting escape to the criminals, I did not think it incumbent upon me to lose my cause from the desire of a prose-

cution. Besides, at that time, I felt too happy to be revengeful ; and so, after a moment's consideration, I conceded to the proposal, and gave my honour as a gentleman—Mr. Oswald obligingly dispensed with an oath—that I would not open the packet till the end of the seventh day. Mr. Oswald then drew forth a piece of paper, on which sundry characters were inscribed, the purport of which was, that if through the papers given me by Marie Oswald, my lawyers were convinced that I could become master of my uncle's property now enjoyed by Gerald Devereux, I should bestow on the said Marie £5000 : half at obtaining this legal opinion, half at obtaining possession of the property. I could not resist a smile, when I observed that the word of a gentleman was enough surety for the safety of the man he had a love for, but that Mr. Oswald required a written bond for the safety of his reward. One is ready enough to trust one's friends to the conscience of another, but as long as a law can be had instead, one is rarely so credulous in respect to one's money.

“The reward shall be doubled, if I succeed,” said I, signing the paper ; and Oswald then

produced a packet, on which was writ in a trembling hand—"For Count Morton Devereux—private—and with haste." As soon as he had given me this precious charge, and reminded me again of my promise, Oswald withdrew. I placed the packet in my bosom, and returned to my guests.

Never had my spirit been so light as it was that evening. The good people I had assembled, thought matrimony never made a man so little serious before. They did not however stay long, and the moment they were gone, I hastened to my own sleeping apartment, to secure the treasure I had acquired. A small *escritoire* stood in this room, and in it I was accustomed to keep whatever I considered most precious. With many a wistful look and murmur at my promise, I consigned the packet to one of the drawers of this *escritoire*. As I was locking the drawer, the sweet voice of Desmarais accosted me. "Would Monsieur," he said, "suffer him to visit a friend that evening, in order to celebrate so joyful an event in Monsieur's destiny? It was not often that he was addicted to vulgar mer-

riment, but on such an occasion he owned that he was tempted to transgress his customary habits, and he felt that Monsieur, with his usual good taste, would feel offended if his servant, within Monsieur's own house, suffered joy to pass the limits of discretion, and enter the confines of noise and inebriety, especially as Monsieur had so positively interdicted all outward sign of extra hilarity. He implored *mille pardones* for the presumption of his request."

"It is made with your usual discretion—there are five guineas for you : go and get drunk with your friend, and be merry instead of wise. But tell me, is it not beneath a philosopher to be moved by any thing, especially any thing that occurs to another,—much less to get drunk upon it?"

"Pardon me, Monsieur," answered Desmarais, bowing to the ground; "one ought to get drunk sometimes, because the next morning one is sure to be thoughtful; and moreover, the practical philosopher ought to indulge every emotion, in order to judge how that emotion would affect another; at least, this is my opinion."

“ Well, go.”

“ My most grateful thanks be with Monsieur ; Monsieur’s nightly toilet is entirely prepared.”

And away went Desmarais, with the light, yet slow step with which he was accustomed to combine elegance with dignity.

I now passed into the room I had prepared for Isora’s *boudoir*. I found her leaning by the window, and I perceived that she had been in tears. As I paused to contemplate her figure, so touchingly, yet so unconsciously mournful in its beautiful and still posture, a more joyous sensation than was wont to mingle with my tenderness for her swelled at my heart. “ Yes,” thought I, “ you are no longer the solitary exile, or the persecuted daughter of a noble but ruined race ; you are not even the bride of a man who must seek in foreign climes, through danger and through hardship, to repair a broken fortune and establish an adventurer’s name ! At last the clouds have rolled from the bright star of your fate—wealth, and pomp, and all that awaits the haughtiest of England’s matrons shall be yours.” And at these thoughts, Fortune seemed to me a

gift a thousand times more precious, than—much as my luxuries prized it—it had ever seemed to me before.

I drew near and laid my hand upon Isora's shoulder, and kissed her cheek. She did not turn round, but strove, by bending over my hand and pressing it to her lips, to conceal that she had been weeping. I thought it kinder to favour the artifice, than to complain of it. I remained silent for some moments, and I then gave vent to the sanguine expectations for the future, which my new treasure entitled me to form. I had already narrated to her the adventure of the day before—I now repeated the purport of my last interview with Oswald: and growing more and more elated as I proceeded, I dwelt at last upon the description of my inheritance, as glowingly as if I had already recovered it. I painted to her imagination its rich woods and its glassy lake, and the fitful and wandering brook, that through brake and shade went bounding on its wild way; I told her of my early roamings, and dilated with a boy's rapture upon my favourite haunts. I brought visibly before her glistening and eager

eyes, the thick copse where, hour after hour, in vague verse, and still vaguer dreams, I had so often whiled away the day ; the old tree which I had climbed to watch the birds in their glad mirth, or to listen unseen to the melancholy sound of the forest deer ; the antique gallery and the vast hall, which by the dim twilights I had paced with a religious awe, and looked upon the pictured forms of my bold fathers, and mused high and ardently upon my destiny to be ; the old grey tower which I had consecrated to myself, and the unwitnessed path which led to the yellow beach, and the wide gladness of the solitary sea ; the little harbour which my earliest ambition had reared, that looked out upon the joyous flowers and the merry fountain, and through the ivy and the jessamine wooed the voice of the bird, and the murmur of the summer bee ; and when I had exhausted my description, I turned to Isora, and said in a lower tone, “ And I shall visit these once more, and with you.”

Isora sighed faintly, and it was not till I had pressed her to speak, that she said :

“ I wish I could deceive myself, Morton, but I

cannot—I cannot root from my heart an impression that I shall never again quit this dull city, with its gloomy walls and its heavy air. A voice within me seems to say—‘ Behold from this very window the boundaries of your living wanderings.’ ”

Isora’s words froze all my previous exaltation. “ It is in vain,” said I, after chiding her for her despondency, “ it is in vain to tell me that you have for this gloomy notion no other reason than that of a vague presentiment. It is time now that I should press you to a greater confidence upon all points consistent with your oath to our mutual enemy, than you have hitherto given me. Speak, dearest, have you not some yet unrevealed causes for alarm ?”

It was but for a moment that Isora hesitated before she answered with that quick tone which indicates that we force words against the will.

“ Yes, Morton, I *will* tell you now, though I would not before the event of this day. On the last day that I saw that fearful man, he said, ‘ I warn you, Isora D’Alvarez, that my love is far fiercer than hatred ; I warn you that your bridals

with Morton Devereux shall be stained with blood. Become his wife, and you perish! Yea, though I suffer hell's tortures for ever and for ever from that hour, my own hand shall strike you to the heart !' Morton, these words have thrilled through me again and again, as if again they were breathed in my very ear ; and I have often started at night and thought the very knife glittered at my breast. So long as our wedding was concealed, and concealed so closely, I was enabled to quiet my fears till they scarcely seemed to exist. But when our nuptials were to be made public, when I knew that they were to reach the ears of that fierce and unaccountable being, I thought I heard my doom pronounced. This, mine own love, must excuse your Isora, if she seemed ungrateful for your generous eagerness to announce our union. And perhaps she would not have acceded to it so easily as she has done, were it not that, in the first place, she felt it was beneath your wife to suffer any terror so purely selfish to make her shrink from the proud happiness of being yours in the light of day ; and if she had not felt (here Isora hid her blushing face in my bosom) that she was

fated to give birth to another, and that the announcement of our wedded love had become necessary to your honour as to mine!"

Though I was in reality awed even to terror by learning from Isora's lip so just a cause for her forebodings—though I shuddered with a horror surpassing even my wrath, when I heard a threat so breathing of deadly and determined passions—yet I concealed my emotions, and only thought of cheering and comforting Isora. I represented to her how guarded and vigilant should ever henceforth be the protection of her husband—that nothing should again separate him from her side—that the extreme malice and fierce persecution of this man were sufficient even to absolve her conscience from the oath of concealment she had taken—that I would procure from the sacred head of our church his own absolution of that vow—that the moment concealment was over, I could take steps to prevent the execution of my rival's threats—that however near to me he might be in blood, no consequences arising from a dispute between us could be so dreadful as the least evil to Isora—and moreover,

to appease her fears, that I would solemnly promise he should never sustain personal assault or harm from my hand;—in short, I said all that my anxiety could dictate, and at last I succeeded in quieting her fears, and she smiled as brightly as the first time I had seen her in the little cottage of her father. She seemed, however, averse to an absolution from her oath—for she was especially scrupulous as to the sanctity of those religious obligations; but I secretly resolved that her safety absolutely required it, and that at all events I would procure the papal absolution from my own promise to her.

At last Isora, turning from that topic, so darkly interesting, pointed to the heavens, which, with their thousand eyes of light, looked down upon us. “Tell me, love,” said she, playfully, as her arm embraced me yet more closely, “if, among yonder stars we could choose a home, which should we select?”

I pointed to one which lay to the left of the moon, and which, though not larger, seemed to burn with an intenser lustre than the rest. Since that night it has ever been to me a fountain of

deep and passionate thought, a well wherein fears and hopes are buried, a mirror in which, in stormy times, I have fancied to read my destiny, and to find some mysterious omen of my intended deeds, a haven which I believe others have reached before me, and a home immortal and unchanging, where, when my wearied and fettered soul is escaped, as a bird, it shall flee away, and have its rest at last.

“What think you of my choice?” said I. Isora looked upward, but did not answer; and as I gazed upon her (while the pale light of heaven streamed quietly upon her face) with her dark eyes, where the tear yet lingered, though rather to soften than to dim, with her noble yet tender features, over which hung a melancholy calm, with her lips apart, and her rich locks wreathing over her marble brow, and contrasted by a single white rose—(that rose I have now — I would not lose one withered leaf of it for a kingdom)—her beauty never seemed to me of so rare an order, nor did my soul ever yearn towards her with so deep a love.

It was past midnight. All was hushed in our bridal chamber. The single lamp, which hung

above, burnt still and clear ; and through the half-closed curtains of the window, the moonlight looked in upon our couch, quiet, and pure, and holy, as if it were charged with blessings.

“ Hush !” said Isora, gently ; “ do you not hear a noise below ?”

I listened — my sense of hearing is naturally duller than my other senses. “ Not a breath,” said I. “ I hear not a breath, save yours.”

“ It was my fancy then !” said Isora, “ and it has ceased now ;” and she clung closer to my breast and fell asleep. I looked on her peaceful and childish countenance, with that concentrated and full delight, with which we clasp all that the universe holds dear to us, and feel as if the universe held nought beside—and thus sleep also crept upon me.

I awoke suddenly ; I felt Isora trembling palpably by my side. Before I could speak to her, I saw standing at a little distance from the bed, a man wrapt in a long dark cloak and masked ; but his eyes shone through the mask, and they glared full upon me. He stood with his arms folded, and perfectly motionless ; but at the other

end of the room, before the *escritoire* in which I had locked the important packet, stood another man, also masked, and wrapped, in a disguising cloak of similar hue and fashion. This man as if alarmed, turned suddenly, and I perceived then that the *escritoire* was already opened, and that the packet was in his hand. I tore myself from Isora's clasp—I stretched my hand to the table by my bedside; upon which my sword was always left: it was gone! No matter!—I was young, strong, fierce, and the stake at hazard was great. I sprung from the bed, I precipitated myself upon the man who held the packet. With one hand I grasped at the important document, with the other I strove to tear the mask from the robber's face. He endeavoured rather, to shake me off, than to attack me; and it was not till I had nearly succeeded in unmasking him, that he drew forth a short poinard, and stabbed me in the side. The blow, which seemed purposely aimed to avoid a mortal part, staggered me, but only for an instant. I renewed my gripe at the packet—I tore it from the robber's hand, and collecting my strength, now fast ebbing away, for one effort, I

bore my assailant to the ground, and fell struggling with him.

But my blood flowed fast from my wound, and my antagonist, if less sinewy than myself, had greatly the advantage in weight and size. Now for one moment I was uppermost, but in the next his knee was upon my chest, and his blade gleamed on high in the pale light of the lamp and moon. I thought I beheld my death—would to God that I had! With a piercing cry, Isora sprang from the bed, flung herself before the lifted blade of the robber, and arrested his arm. This man had, in the whole contest, acted with a singular forbearance—he did so now—he paused for a moment and dropped his hand. Hitherto, the other man had not stirred from his mute position: he now moved one step towards us, brandishing a poinard like his comrade's. Isora raised her hand supplicatingly towards him, and cried out—"Spare him, spare *him*!—Oh, mercy, mercy!"—With one stride the ruffian was by my side: he muttered some words which passion seemed to render inarticulate, and half pushing aside his comrade, his raised weapon flashed before my eyes, now

dim and reeling—I made a vain effort to rise—the blade descended—Isora, unable to arrest it, threw herself before it—her blood, her heart's blood, gushed over me—I saw and felt no more.

When I recovered my senses, my servants were round me—a deep red, wet stain upon the sofa on which I was laid, brought the whole scene I had witnessed again before me—terrible and distinct. I sprang to my feet, and asked for Isora, a low murmur caught my ear—I turned and beheld a dark form stretched on the bed, and surrounded like myself by gazers and menials—I tottered towards that bed, my bridal bed—I motioned, with a fierce gesture, the crowd away—I heard my name breathed audibly—the next moment I was by Isora's side. All pain—all weakness—all consciousness of my wound—of my very self, were gone—life seemed curdled into a single agonizing and fearful thought. I fixed my eyes upon hers; and though *there* the film was gathering dark and rapidly, I saw yet visible and unconquered, the deep love of that faithful and warm heart which had lavished its life for mine.

I threw my arms round her—I pressed my lips wildly to hers. “Speak—speak!” I cried, and my blood gushed over her with the effort; “in mercy, speak!”

Even in death and agony, the gentle being who had been as wax unto my lightest wish, struggled to obey me. “Do not grieve for me,” she said, in a tremulous and broken voice: “it is dearer to die for you than to live!”

Those were her last words. I felt her breath abruptly cease. The heart, pressed to mine, was still! I started up in dismay—the light shone full upon her face. O God! that I should live to write that Isora was—no more!

END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

A Re-entrance into Life through the Ebon Gate—Affliction.

MONTHS passed away before my senses returned to me. I rose from the bed of suffering and of madness, calm, collected, immoveable—altered, but tranquil. All the vigilance of justice had been employed to discover the murderers, but in vain. The packet was gone; and directly I, who alone was able to do so, recovered enough to state the loss of that document, suspicion naturally rested on Gerald, as on one whom that loss essen-

tially benefited. He came publicly forward to anticipate inquiry. He proved that he had not stirred from home during the whole week in which the event had occurred. That seemed likely enough to others ;—it is the tools that work—not the instigator—the bravo, not the employer ; but I, who saw in him, not only the robber, but that fearful rival, who had long threatened Isora that my bridals should be stained with blood, was somewhat staggered by the undeniable proofs of his absence from the scene of that night ; and I was still more bewildered in conjecture, by remembering that, so far as their disguises and my own hurried and confused observation could allow me to judge, the person of neither villain, still less that of Isora's murderer, corresponded with the proportions and height of Gerald. Still, however, whether mediately or immediately—whether as the executor or the designer—not a doubt remained on my mind, that on his head was justice due. I directed inquiry towards Montreuil—he was abroad at the time of my recovery ; but, immediately on his return, he came forward boldly and at once, to meet and even to court the inquiry I had instituted—he

did more,—he demanded on what ground, besides my own word, it rested, that this packet had ever been in my possession; and, to my surprise and perplexity, it was utterly impossible to produce the smallest trace of Mr. Marie Oswald. His half-brother, the attorney, had died, it is true, just before the event of that night, and it was also true that he had seen Marie on his death-bed; but no other corroboration of my story could be substantiated, and no other information of the man obtained; and the partizans of Gerald were not slow in hinting at the great interest I had in forging a tale, respecting a will, about the authenticity of which I was at law.

The robbers had entered the house by a back-door, which was found open. No one had perceived their entrance or exit, except Desmarais, who stated, that he heard a cry—that he, having spent the greater part of the night abroad, had not been in bed above an hour before he heard it—that he rose and hurried towards my room, whence the cry came—that he met two men masked on the stairs—that he seized one, who struck him in the breast with a poinard, dashed him to the ground,

and escaped—that he then immediately alarmed the house, and the servants accompanying him, he proceeded, despite his wound, to my apartment, where he found Isora and myself bleeding and lifeless, with the escritoire broken open.

The only contradiction to this tale was, that the officers of justice found the escritoire not broken open, but unlocked, but no key in it ; and the key which belonged to it was found in a pocket-book in my clothes, where Desmarais said, rightly, I always kept it. How, then, had the escritoire been unlocked? it was supposed by the master-keys peculiar to experienced burglars ; this diverted suspicion into a new channel, and it was suggested, that the robbery and the murder had really been committed by common housebreakers. It was then discovered, that a large purse of gold, and a diamond cross, which the escritoire contained, were gone. And a few articles of ornamental *bijouterie*, which I had retained from the wreck of my former profusion in such baubles, and which were kept in a room below stairs, were also missing. These circumstances immediately confirmed the opinion of those who threw the guilt upon vulgar

and mercenary villains, and a very probable and plausible supposition was built on this hypothesis. Might not this Oswald, at best an adventurer with an indifferent reputation, have forged this story of the packet, in order to obtain admission into the house, and reconnoitre, during the confusion of a wedding, in what places the most portable articles of value were stowed? a thousand opportunities in the opening and shutting of the house-doors would have allowed an ingenious villain to glide in; nay, he might have secreted himself in my own room, and seen the place where I had put the packet—certain would he then be that I had selected, for the repository of a document I believed so important, that place where all that I most valued was secured; and hence he would naturally resolve to break open the *escritoire*, above all other places, which, to an uninformed robber, might have seemed not only less exposed to danger, but equally likely to contain articles of value. The same confusion which enabled him to enter and conceal himself, would have also enabled him to withdraw and introduce his accomplice. This notion was rendered probable, by his insisting so strongly on my

not opening the packet within a certain time ; had I opened it immediately, I might have perceived that a deceit had been practised, and not have hoarded it in that place of security which it was the villain's object to discover. Hence, too, in opening the escritoire, he would naturally retake the packet, (which other plunderers might not have cared to steal,) as well as things of more real price—naturally retake it, in order that his previous imposition might not be detected, and that suspicion might be cast upon those who would appear to have an interest in stealing a packet which I believed to be so inestimably important.

What gave a still greater colour to this supposition, was, the fact that none of the servants had seen Oswald leave the house, though many had seen him enter. And what put his guilt beyond a doubt in the opinion of many, was his sudden and mysterious disappearance. To my mind, all these circumstances were not conclusive. Both the men seemed taller than Oswald ; and I knew that that confusion, which was so much insisted upon, had not—thanks to my singular fastidiousness in those matters—ex-

isted. I was also perfectly convinced that Oswald could not have been hid in my room while I locked up the packet; and there was something in the behaviour of the murderer utterly unlike that of a common robber, actuated by common motives.

All these opposing arguments were, however, of a nature to be deemed nugatory by the world, and on the only one of any importance, in their estimation, *viz.*, the height of Oswald being different from that of the robbers, it was certainly very probable, that in a scene so dreadful, so brief, so confused, I should easily be mistaken. Having therefore once flowed into this direction, public opinion soon settled into the full conviction that Oswald was the real criminal, and against Oswald was the whole strength of inquiry ultimately, but still vainly bent. Some few, it is true, of that kind class, who love family mysteries, and will not easily forego the notion of a brother's guilt, for that of a mere vulgar house-breaker, still shook their heads, and talked of Gerald; but the suspicion was vague and partial,

and it was only in the close gossip of private circles, that it was audibly vented.

I had formed an opinion by no means favourable to the innocence of Mr. Jean Desmarais ; and I took especial care that the Necessitarian, who would only have thought robbery and murder pieces of ill luck, should undergo a most rigorous examination. I remembered that he had seen me put the packet into the *escritoire* ; and this circumstance was alone sufficient to arouse my suspicion. Desmarais bared his breast gracefully to the magistrate. “ Would a man, Sir,” he said, “ a man of my youth, suffer such a scar as that, if he could help it ? ” The magistrate laughed : frivolity is often a rogue’s best policy, if he did but know it. One finds it very difficult to think a coxcomb can commit robbery and murder. Howbeit Desmarais came off triumphantly ; and immediately after this examination, which had been his second one, and instigated solely at my desire, he came to me with a blush of virtuous indignation on his thin cheeks. “ He did not presume,” he said, with a bow profounder

than ever, “to find fault with Monsieur le Comte; it was his fate to be the victim of ungrateful suspicion; but philosophical truths could not always conquer the feelings of the man, and he came to request his dismissal.” I gave it him with pleasure.

I must now state my own feelings on the matter: but I shall do so briefly. In my own mind, I repeat, I was fully impressed with the conviction that Gerald was the real, and the head criminal; and thrice did I resolve to repair to Devereux Court, where he still resided, to lie in wait for him, to reproach him with his guilt, and at the sword’s point in deadly combat to seek its earthly expiation. I spare the reader a narration of the terrible struggles, which nature, conscience, all scruples and prepossessions of education and of blood, held with this fierce resolution, the unholiness of which I endeavoured to clothe with the name of justice to Isora. Suffice it to say, that this resolution I forewent at last; and I did so more from a feeling that, despite my own conviction of Gerald’s guilt, one rational doubt rested upon the circumstance that the mur-

derer seemed to my eyes of an inferior height to Gerald, and that the person whom I had pursued on the night I had received that wound which brought Isora to my bedside, and who, it was natural to believe, was my rival, appeared to me not only also slighter, and shorter than Gerald, but of a size that seemed to tally with the murderer's.

This solitary circumstance, which contradicted my other impressions, was, I say, more effectual in making me dismiss the thought of personal revenge on Gerald, than the motives which virtue and religion should have dictated. The deep desire of vengeance, is the calmest of all the passions, and it is the one which most demands certainty to the reason, before it releases its emotions, and obeys their dictates. The blow which was to do justice to Isora, I had resolved should not be dealt, till I had obtained the most utter certainty that it fell upon the true criminal. And thus, though I cherished through all time, and through all change, the burning wish for retribution, I was doomed to cherish it in secret, and not for years and years to behold a hope of attaining

it. Once only I vented my feelings upon Gerald. I could not rest, or sleep, or execute the world's objects, till I had done so; but when they were thus once vented, methought I could wait the will of time with a more settled patience, and I re-entered upon the common career of life, more externally fitted to fulfil its duties and its aims.

That single indulgence of emotion followed immediately after my resolution of not forcing Gerald into bodily contest. I left my sword, lest I might be tempted to forget my determination. I rode to Devereux Court—I entered Gerald's chamber, while my horse stood unstalled at the gate. I said but few words, but each word was a volume. I told him to enjoy the fortune he had acquired by fraud, and the conscience he had stained with murder.—“Enjoy them while you may,” I said, “but know that sooner or later shall come a day, when the blood that cries from earth shall be heard in Heaven—and *your* blood shall appease it. Know if I seem to disobey the voice at my heart, I hear it night and day—and I only live to fulfil at one time its commands.”

I left him stunned and horror-stricken. I flung

myself on my horse, and cast not a look behind as I rode from the towers and domains of which I had been despoiled. Never from that time would I trust myself to meet or see the despoiler. Once, directly after I had thus braved him in his usurped hall, he wrote to me. I returned the letter unopened. Enough of this; the reader will now perceive what was the real nature of my feelings of revenge; and will appreciate the reasons which, throughout this history, will cause me never or rarely to recur to those feelings again, until at least he will perceive a just hope of their consummation.

I went with a quiet air and a set brow into the world. It was a time of great political excitement. Though my creed forbade me the open senate, it could not deprive me of the veiled intrigue. St. John found ample employment for my ambition, and I entered into the toils and objects of my race with a seeming avidity, more eager and engrossing than their own. In what ensues, you will perceive a great change in the character of my memoirs. Hitherto, I chiefly pourtrayed to you *myself*. I bared open to you

my heart and temper—my passions, and the thoughts which belong to our passions. I shall now rather bring before you the natures and the minds of others. The lover and the dreamer are no more ! The satirist and the observer—the derider of human follies, participating while he derides—the worldly and keen actor in the human drama,—these are what the district of my history on which you enter, will pourtray me. From whatever pangs to me the change may have been wrought, you will be the gainer by that change. The gaudy dissipation of courts ; the vicissitudes and the vanities of those who haunt them ; the glittering jest, and the light strain ; the passing irony, or the close reflection ; the characters of the great ; the colloquies of wit ;—these are what delight the temper, and amuse the leisure more than the hues of passion and the doom of love. As the monster of the Nile is found beneath the sunniest banks, and in the most freshening wave, the stream may seem to wander on in melody and mirth—the ripple and the beam ; but *who* shall tell what lurks, dark, and fearful, and ever vigilant, below !

CHAPTER II.

Ambitious Projects.

IT is not my intention to write a political history, instead of a private biography. No doubt, in the next century, there will be volumes enough written in celebration of that æra, which my contemporaries are pleased to term the greatest that in modern times has ever existed. Besides, in the private and more concealed intrigues with which I was engaged with St. John, there was something which regard for others would compel me to preserve in silence. I shall therefore briefly state, that in 1712, St. John dignified the peerage by that title which his exile and his genius have rendered so illustrious.

I was with him on the day this honour was

publicly issued out. I found him walking to and fro his room, with his arms folded, and with a very peculiar compression of his nether lip, which was a custom he had when any thing greatly irritated or disturbed him.

“ Well,” said he, stopping abruptly as he saw me, “ well, considering the peacock Harley brought so bright a plume to his own nest, we must admire the generosity which spared this gay dunghill feather to mine !”

“ How !” said I, though I knew the cause of his angry metaphor. St. John used metaphors in speech scarcely less than in writing.

“ How !” cried the new peer, eagerly, and with one of those flashing looks, which made his expression of indignation the most powerful I ever saw. “ How ! Was the sacred promise granted to me of my own collateral earldom, to be violated ; and while the weight—the toil—the difficulty—the odium, of affairs, from which Harley, the despotic dullard, shrunk alike in imbecility and fear, had been left exclusively to my share, an insult in the shape of an honour, to be left exclusively to my reward ? You know my disposition

is not to over-rate the mere baubles of ambition—you know I care little for titles and for orders in themselves ; but the most worthless thing becomes of consequence, if made a symbol of what is of value, or designed as the token of an affront. Listen : a collateral earldom falls vacant—it is partly promised me. Suddenly I am dragged from the House of Commons, where I am all powerful ; I am given not this earldom, which, as belonging to my house, would alone have induced me to consent to a removal from a sphere where my enemies allow I had greater influence than any single commoner in the kingdom—I am given not this, but a miserable compromise of distinction—a new and an inferior rank—given it against my will—thrust into the Upper House, to defend what this pompous driveller, Oxford, is forced to forsake ; and not only exposed to all the obloquy of a most infuriate party, opposed to me, but mortified by an intentional affront from the party which, heart and soul, I have supported. You know that my birth is to the full as noble as Harley's—you know that my influence in the Lower House is far greater—you know that my name in the country,

may, throughout Europe, is far more popular—you know that the labour allotted to me has been far more weighty—you know that the late peace of Utrecht is entirely my framing—that the foes to the measure direct all their venom against me—that the friends of the measure heap upon me all the honour :—when, therefore, this exact time is chosen for breaking a promise formerly made to me—when a pretended honour, known to be most unpalatable to me, is thrust upon me—when, at this very time, too, six vacant ribbons of the garter flaunt by me—one resting on the knee of this Harley, who was able to obtain an earldom for himself—the others given to men of far inferior pretensions, though not inferior rank, to my own—myself markedly, glaringly passed by,—how can I avoid feeling that things despicable in themselves, are become of a vital power, from the evident intention that they should be insults to me ! The insects we despise as they buzz around us, become dangerous when they settle on ourselves and we feel their sting ! But,” added Bolingbroke, suddenly relapsing into a smile, “ I have long wanted a nickname, I have

now found one for myself. You know Oxford is called ‘The Dragon;’ well, henceforth call me ‘St. George;’ for, as sure as I live, will I overthrow the Dragon. I say this in jest, but I mean it in earnest. And now that I have discharged my bile, let us talk of this wonderful poem, which, though I have read it a hundred times, I am never wearied of admiring.”

“Ah—the Rape of the Lock! It is indeed beautiful, but I am not fond of poetry now. By the way, how is it that all our modern poets speak to the taste, the mind, the judgment, and never to the *feelings*? Are they right in doing so?”

“My friend, we are now in a polished age. What have feelings to do with civilization?”

“Why, more than you will allow. Perhaps the greater our civilization, the more numerous our feelings. Our animal passions lose in excess, but our mental gain; and it is to the mental that poetry should speak. Our English muse, even in this wonderful poem, seems to me to be growing, like our English beauties, too glitteringly artificial—it wears rouge and a hoop!”

“Ha! ha!—yes, they ornament now rather than

create — cut drapery rather than marble. Our poems remind me of the antient statues. Phidias made them, and Bubo, and Bombax dressed them in purple. But this does not apply to young Pope, who has shown in this very poem, that he can work the quarry as well as choose the gems. But, see the carriage awaits us. I have worlds to do,—first there is Swift to see—next, there is some exquisite Bourgogne to taste—you taste well, and must assist ;—then, too, there is the new actress ; and, by the by, you must tell me what you think of Bentley's Horace : we will drive first to my bookseller's to see it—Swift shall wait—Heavens ! how he would rage if he heard me. I was going to say what a pity it is that that man should have so much littleness of vanity ; but I should have uttered a very foolish sentiment if I had !”

“ And why ?”

“ Because, if he had not so much littleness, perhaps he would not be so great : what, but vanity, makes a man write and speak, and slave, and become famous ? Alas !” and here St. John's countenance changed from gaiety to thought ; “ 'tis a melancholy thing in human nature, that so little is good and noble, both in itself and in its

source ! Our very worst passions will often produce sublimer effects than our best. Phidias, (we will apply to him for another illustration), made the wonderful statue of Minerva for his country ; but, in order to avenge himself on that country, he eclipsed it in the far more wonderful statue of the Jupiter Olympius. Thus, from a vicious feeling emanated a greater glory than from an exalted principle ; and the artist was less celebrated for the monument of his patriotism than for that of his revenge ! But, *allons, mon cher*, we grow wise and dull. Let us go to choose our Burgundy, and our comrades to share it."

However, with his characteristic affectation of bounding ambition, and consequently hope, to no one object in particular, and of mingling affairs of light importance, with those of the most weighty, Lord Bolingbroke might pretend not to recur to, or to dwell upon, his causes of resentment—from that time they never ceased to influence him to a great, and for a statesman, an unpardonable degree. We cannot, however, blame politicians for their hatred, until, without hating any body, we have for a long time been politicians

ourselves ; strong minds have strong passions, and men of strong passions must hate as well as love.

The next two years passed, on my part, in perpetual intrigues of diplomacy, combined with an unceasing, though secret endeavour to penetrate the mystery which hung over the events of that dreadful night. All, however, was in vain. I know not what the English police may be hereafter, but, in my time, its officers seem to be chosen like honest Dogberry's companions, among "the most senseless and fit men." They are, however, to the full, as much knaves as fools ; and perhaps a wiser posterity will scarcely believe, that when things of the greatest value are stolen, the owners, on applying to the chief magistrate, will often be told that no redress can be given there, while one of the officers will engage to get back the goods, upon paying the thieves a certain sum in exchange — if this is refused — *adieu pour jamais, à vos effets !* A pretty state of internal government !

It was about a year after the murder, that my mother informed me of an event which tore from my heart its last private tie, viz., the death of Aubrey. The last letter I had received from him,

has been placed before the reader ; it was written at Devereux Court, just before he left it for ever. Montreuil had been with him during the illness which proved fatal, and which occurred in Ireland. He died of consumption ; and when I heard from my mother that Montreuil dwelt most glowingly upon the devotion he had manifested during the last months of his life, I could not help fearing that the morbidity of his superstition had done the work of physical disease. On this fatal news, my mother retired from Devereux Court, to a company of ladies of our faith, who resided together, and practised the most ascetic rules of a nunnery, though they gave not to their house that ecclesiastical name. My mother had long meditated this project, and it was now a melancholy pleasure to put it into execution. From that period I rarely heard from her, and by little and little she so shrunk from all worldly objects, that my visits, and I believe even those of Gerald, became unwelcome and distasteful.

As to my lawsuit, it went on gloriously, according to the assertions of my brisk little lawyer, who had declared so emphatically that he liked making

quick work of a suit. And, at last, what with bribery, and feeing, and pushing, a day was fixed for the final adjustment of my claim—it came—the cause was heard and lost. I should have been ruined, but for one circumstance; the old lady, my father's godmother, who had witnessed my first and concealed marriage, left me a pretty estate near Epsom. I turned it into gold, and it was fortunate that I did so soon, as the reader is about to see.

The queen died—and a cloud already began to look menacing to the eyes of the Viscount Bolingbroke, and therefore to those of the Count Devereux. “We will weather out the shower,” said Bolingbroke.

“Could not you,” said I, “make our friend Oxford the Talapat?”* and Bolingbroke laughed. All men find wit in the jests broken on their enemies!

One morning, however, I received a laconic note from him, which, notwithstanding its short-

* A thing used by the Siamese for the same purpose as we now use the umbrella. A work descriptive of Siam, by M. de la Loubere, in which the Talapat is somewhat minutely described, having been translated into English, and having excited some curiosity, a few years before Count Devereux now uses the word, the allusion was probably familiar.—ED.

ness and seeming gaiety, I knew well signified that something, not calculated for laughter, had occurred. I went, and found that his new majesty had deprived him of the seals and secured his papers. We looked very blank at each other. At last, Bolingbroke smiled. I must say, that culpable as he was in some points as a politician—culpable, not from being ambitious, (for I would not give much for the statesman who is otherwise,) but from not having inseparably linked his ambition to the welfare of his country, rather than to that of a party—for despite of what has been said of him, his ambition was never selfish—culpable as he was when glory allured him, he was most admirable when danger assailed him !* and, by the shade of

* I know well that it has been said otherwise, and that Bolingbroke has been accused of timidity for not staying in England, and making Mr. Robert Walpole a present of his head. The elegant author of “*De Vere*,” who, indeed, appears to me to have taken a view of Lord Bolingbroke’s character more consistent with the cant of a pseudo-philosophy than a deep consideration of human nature, or a diligent comparison of historical facts, has fallen into a very great, though a very hacknied error, in lauding Oxford’s political character, and condemning Bolingbroke’s, because the former awaited a trial, and the latter shunned it. A very little reflection might, perhaps, have taught the accomplished novelist, that there could be no comparison between the two cases, because there was no comparison between the relative *danger* of Oxford and Boling-

that Tully whom he so idolized, his philosophy was the most conveniently worn of any person's I ever met. When it would have been in the way—at the supper of an actress—in the levées of a

broke. Oxford, as their subsequent impeachment proved, was far more numerous and powerfully supported than his illustrious enemy; and there is really no earthly cause for doubting the truth of Bolingbroke's assertion, viz. that, "He had received repeated and certain information that a resolution was taken by those who had power to execute it, to pursue him to the scaffold." There are certain situations in which a brave and a good man should willingly surrender life; but I humbly opine that there may sometimes exist a situation in which he should preserve it: and if ever man was placed in that latter situation, it was Lord Bolingbroke. To choose *unnecessarily* to put one's head under the axe, without benefitting any but one's enemies by the act, is, in my eyes, the proof of a fool, not a hero; and to attack a man for not placing his head in that agreeable and most useful predicament—for preferring, in short, to live for a world, rather than to perish by a faction, appears to be a mode of arguing that has a wonderful resemblance to nonsense. When Lord Bolingbroke was impeached, two men only out of those numerous retainers in the Lower House who had been wont so loudly to applaud the secretary of state, in his prosecution of those very measures for which he was now to be condemned—two men only (General Ross and Mr. Hungerford), uttered a single syllable in defence of the minister disgraced. This, by the way, is that same generous, courageous, unswerving body of men whom Lord John Russell has been pleased, in his late work, to call an "admirable assembly." It is quite astonishing what a vast quantity of unexpected intelligence may be packed up in the elastic *valise* of one little epithet.—ED.

court—in the *boudoir* of a beauty—in the arena of the senate—in the intrigue of the cabinet, you would not have seen, no ! not a seam of the good old garment. But directly it was wanted—in the hour of pain—in the day of peril—in the suspense of exile—in (worst of all) the torpor of tranquillity, my extraordinary friend unfolded it piece by piece—wrapped himself up in it—sat down—defied the world, and uttered the most beautiful sentiments upon the comfort and luxury of his raiment, that can possibly be imagined. It used to remind me, that same philosophy of his, of the enchanted tent in the Arabian Tale, which one moment, lay wrapped in a nut-shell, and the next covered an army.

Bolingbroke smiled, and quoted Cicero, and after an hour's conversation, which on his part was by no means like that of a person whose very head was in no enviable state of safety, he slid at once from a sarcasm upon Steele into a discussion as to the best measures to be adopted. Let me be brief on this point ! Throughout the whole of that short session, he behaved in a manner, more delicately and profoundly wise, than I think, the whole of

his previous administration can equal. He sustained with the most unflagging, the most unwearied dexterity, the sinking spirits of his associates. Without an act, or the shadow of an act, that could be called time-serving, he laid himself out to conciliate the king, and to propitiate parliament ;—with a dignified prudence, which, while it seemed above petty pique, was well calculated to remove the appearance of that disaffection with which he was charged, and discriminated justly between the king and the new administration, he lent his talents to the assistance of the monarch, by whom his impeachment was already resolved on, and aided in the settlement of the civil list, while he was in full expectation of a criminal accusation.

The new parliament met, and all doubt was over. An impeachment of the late administration was decided upon. I was settling bills with my little lawyer one morning, when Bolingbroke entered my room. He took a chair, nodded to me not to dismiss my assistant, joined our conversation, and when conversation was merged in

accounts, he took up a book of songs, and amused himself with it till my business was over and my disciple of Coke retired. He then said, very slowly, and with a slight yawn—"You have never been at Paris, I think?"

"Never—you are enchanted with that gay city."

"Yes, but when I was last there, the good people flattered my vanity enough to bribe my taste. I shall be able to form a more unbiassed and impartial judgment in a few days."

"A few days!"

"Ay, my dear count: does it startle you? I wonder whether the pretty *De Tencin* will be as kind to me as she was, and whether *tout le monde* (that most exquisite phrase for five hundred people,) will rise now at the Opera on my entrance. Do you think that a banished minister can have any, the smallest, resemblance, to what he was when in power? By gumdragon, as our friend Swift so euphoniously and elegantly says, or swears, by gumdragon, I think not! What altered Satan so after his fall? what gave him horns and

a tail ? nothing but his disgrace. Oh ! years, and disease, plague, pestilence, and famine never alter a man so much as the loss of power."

" You say wisely ; but what am I to gather from your words ? is it all over with us in real earnest ?"

" Us ! with *me* it is indeed all over—*you* may stay here for ever. *I* must fly — a packet boat to Calais, or a room in the Tower—I must choose between the two. I had some thoughts of remaining—and confronting my trial, but it would be folly—there is a difference between Oxford and me. He has friends, though out of power ; I have none. If they impeach him—he will escape ; if they impeach me, they will either shut me up like a rat in a cage, for twenty years, till, old and forgotten, I tear my heart out with my confinement, or they will bring me at once to the block. No, no—I must keep myself for another day ; and while they banish me, I will leave the seeds of the true cause to grow up till my return. Wise and exquisite policy of my foes—' Frustra Cassium amovisti, si gliscere et vigere Brutorum emulos passurus es.' But I have no time to lose—farewell, my friend

—God bless you—you are saved from these storms ; and even intolerance, which prevented the exercise of your genius, preserves you now from the danger of having applied that genius to the welfare of your country : God knows, whatever my faults, I have sacrificed what I loved better than all things—study and pleasure—to her cause. In her wars I served even my enemy Marlborough, in order to serve her ; her peace I effected, and I suffer for it. Be it so, I am

“ ‘Fidens animi atque in utrumque paratus.’ ”

Once more I embrace you—farewell.”

“Nay,” said I, “listen to me, you shall not go alone. France is already, in reality, my native country ; there did I receive my birth, it is no hardship to return to my *natale solum*—it is an honour to return in the company of Henry St. John. I will have no refusal ; my law case is over, my papers are few, my money I will manage to transfer. Remember the anecdote you told me (yesterday,) of Anaxagoras, who, when asked where his country was, pointed with his finger to Heaven. It is applicable, I hope, as

well to me as to yourself; to me uncelebrated and obscure, to you the senator and the statesman."

In vain Bolingbroke endeavoured to dissuade me from this resolution; he was the only friend fate had left me, and I was resolved that misfortune should not part us. At last he embraced me tenderly, and consented to what he could not resist. "But you cannot," he said, "quit England to-morrow night, as I must."

"Pardon me," I answered, "the briefer the preparation, the greater the excitement, and what in life is equal to *that*?"

"True," answered Bolingbroke: "to some natures, too restless to be happy, excitement can compensate for all; compensate for years wasted, and hopes scattered—compensate for bitter regret at talents perverted, and passions unrestrained. But we will talk philosophically when we have more leisure. You will dine with me to-morrow; we will go to the play together—I promised poor Lucy that I would see her at the theatre, and I cannot break my word—and an hour afterwards we will commence our excursion to Paris. And now I will explain to you the plan I have arranged for our escape."

CHAPTER III.

The real Actors Spectators of the false ones.

IT was a brilliant night at the theatre ! The boxes were crowded to excess. Every eye was directed towards Lord Bolingbroke, who with his usual dignified and consummate grace of manner, conversed with the various loiterers with whom, from time to time, his box was filled.

“ Look yonder,” said a very young man, of singular personal beauty, “ look yonder, my Lord, what a panoply of smiles the duchess wears to-night, and how triumphantly she directs those eyes, which they say were once so beautiful, to your box.”

“ Ah,” said Bolingbroke, “ her grace does me too much honour ; I must not neglect to acknowledge her courtesy ;” and, leaning over the box, Bolingbroke watched his opportunity till the Duchess of Marlborough, who sat opposite to him, and who was talking with great and evidently joyous vivacity to a tall, thin man, beside her, directed her attention, and that of her whole party, in a fixed and concentrated stare, to the emperilled minister. With a dignified smile Lord Bolingbroke then put his hand to his heart, and bowed profoundly ; the duchess looked a little abashed, but returned the courtesy quickly and slightly, and renewed her conversation.

“ Faith, my Lord,” cried the young gentleman who had before spoken, “ you managed that well ! No reproach is like that which we clothe in a smile, and present with a bow.”

“ I am happy,” said Lord Bolingbroke, “ that my conduct receives the grave support of a son of my political opponent.”

“ *Grave* support, my Lord ! you are mistaken—never apply the epithet grave to any thing belonging to Philip Wharton. But, in sober earnest, I

have sat long enough with you to terrify all my friends, and must now shew my worshipful face in another part of the house. Count Devereux, will you come with me to the duchess's?"

"What! the duchess's, immediately after Lord Bolingbroke's!—the Whig after the Tory—it would be as trying to one's assurance, as a change from the cold bath to the hot to one's constitution."

"Well, and what so delightful as a trial in which one triumphs? and a change in which one does not lose even one's countenance?"

"Take care, my Lord," said Bolingbroke, laughing; "those are dangerous sentiments for a man like you, to whom the hopes of two great parties are directed, to express so openly—even on a trifle, and in a jest."

"'Tis for that reason I utter them. I like being the object of hope and fear to men, since my miserable fortune made me marry at fourteen, and cease to be aught but a wedded thing to the women. But, sup with me at the Bedford—you, my Lord, and the Count."

“ And you will ask Walpole, Addison, and Steele,* to join us ; eh ? ” said Bolingbroke. “ No, we have other engagements for to-night ; but we shall meet again soon.”

And the eccentric youth nodded his adieu, disappeared, and a minute afterwards was seated by the side of the Duchess of Marlborough.

“ There goes a boy,” said Bolingbroke, “ who at the age of fifteen has in him the power to be the greatest man of his day, and in all probability will only be the most singular. An obstinate man is sure of doing well ; a wavering or a whimsical one (which is the same thing), is as uncertain, even in his elevation, as a shuttlecock. But look to the box at the right—do you see the beautiful Lady Mary ? ”

“ Yes,” said Mr. Trefusis, who was with us, “ she has only just come to town. ’Tis said she and Ned Montague live like doves.”

“ How ! ” said Lord Bolingbroke, “ that quick, restless eye seems to have very little of the dove in it.”

“ But how beautiful she is ! ” said Trefusis,

* All political opponents of Lord Bolingbroke.

admiringly. “What a pity that those exquisite hands should be so dirty ! It reminds me,” (Trefusis loved a coarse anecdote) “of her answer to old Madame de Noailles, who made exactly the same remark to her. ‘Do you call my hands dirty?’ cried Lady Mary, holding them up with the most innocent *naïveté*, ‘Ah, Madame, *si vous voyez mes pieds !*’ ”

“*Fi donc !*” said I, turning away ; “but who is that very small, deformed man behind her,—he with the bright black eye.”

“Know you not ?” said Bolingbroke ; “tell it not in Gath !—’tis a rising sun, whom I have already learnt to worship—the young author of the ‘*Essay on Criticism*,’ and the ‘*Rape of the Lock*.’ ”
Egad, the *petit poëte* seems to eclipse us with the women as much as with the men. Do you mark how eagerly Lady Mary listens to him—even though the tall gentleman in black, who in vain endeavours to win her attentions, is thought the handsomest gallant in London ? Ah, Genius is paid by smiles from all females but Fortune—little, methinks, does that young poet, in his first intoxication of flattery and fame, guess what a lot

of contest and strife is in store for him. The very breath which a literary man respires is hot with hatred, and the youthful proselyte enters that career which seems to him so glittering, even as Dame Pliant's brother in the Alchemist entered town—not to be fed with luxury, and diet on pleasure, but ‘to learn to quarrel and live by his wits.’”

The play was now nearly over. With great gravity Lord Bolingbroke summoned one of the principal actors to his box, and bespoke a play for the next week: leaning then on my arm he left the theatre. We hastened to his home, put on our disguises, and without any adventure worth recounting, effected our escape, and landed safely at Calais.

CHAPTER IV.

Paris—A Female Politician, and an Ecclesiastical One—Sundry other Matters.

THE ex-minister was received both at Calais and at Paris with the most gratifying honours—he was then entirely the man to captivate the French. The beauty of his person, the grace of his manner, his consummate taste in all things, the exceeding variety and sparkling vivacity of his conversation, enchanted them. In later life he has grown more reserved and profound, even in habitual intercourse, and attention is now fixed to the solidity of the diamond, as at that time one was too dazzled to think of any thing but its brilliancy.

While Bolingbroke was receiving visits of state, I busied myself in inquiring after a certain Madame de Balzac. The reader will remember that the envelope of that letter which Oswald had brought to me at Devereux Court, was signed by the letters C. de B. Now, when Oswald disappeared after that dreadful night to which even now I can scarcely bring myself to allude, these initials occurred to my remembrance, and Oswald having said they belonged to a lady formerly intimate with my father, I inquired of my mother if she could guess to what French lady such initials would apply. She, with an evident pang of jealousy, mentioned a Madame de Balzac; and to this lady I now resolved to address myself, with the faint hope of learning from her some intelligence respecting Oswald. It was not difficult to find out the abode of one who in her day had played no inconsiderable *rôle* in that comedy of errors,—the great world. She was still living at Paris: what Frenchwoman would, if she could help it, live anywhere else? “There are a hundred gates,” said the witty Madame de Choisi to me, “which lead

into Paris, but only two roads out of it,—the convent, or (odious word !) the grave.”

I hastened to Madame Balzac’s hotel. I was ushered through three magnificent apartments into one, which to my eyes seemed to contain a throne : upon a nearer inspection I discovered it was a bed. Upon a large chair, by a very bad fire—it was in the month of March—sat a tall, handsome woman, excessively painted, and dressed in a manner, which to my taste, accustomed to English finery, seemed singularly plain. I had sent in the morning to request permission to wait on her, so that she was prepared for my visit. She rose, offered me her cheek, kissed mine, shed several tears and in short testified a great deal of kindness towards me. Old ladies who have flirted with our fathers, always seem to claim a sort of property in the sons !

Before she resumed her seat she held me out at arm’s length. “ You have a family likeness to your brave father,” said she, with a little disappointment ; “ but—”

“ Madame de Balzac would add,” interrupted I, filling up the sentence which I saw her *bienveillance* had made her break off, “ Madame de

Balzac would add, that I am not so good looking. It is true : the likeness is transmitted to me within rather than without ; and if I have not my father's privilege to be admired, I have at least his capacities to admire," and I bowed.

Madame de Balzac took three large pinches of snuff. " That is very well said," said she gravely : " very well indeed ! not at all like your father though, who never paid a compliment in his life. Your clothes, by the by, are in exquisite taste : I had no idea that English people had arrived to such perfection in the fine arts. Your face is a little too long ! You admire Racine, of course ? How do you like Paris ?"

All this was not said gaily or quickly : Madame de Balzac was by no means a gay or a quick person. She belonged to a peculiar school of Frenchwomen, who affected a little languor, a great deal of stiffness, an indifference to forms when forms were to be used by themselves, and an unrelaxing demand of forms when forms were to be observed to them by others. Added to this, they talked plainly upon all matters, without ever entering upon sentiment. This was the

school she belonged to ; but she possessed the traits of the individual as well as of the species. She was keen, ambitious, worldly, not unaffectionate, nor unkind ; very proud, a little of the devotee—because it was the fashion to be so—an enthusiastic admirer of military glory, and a most prying, searching, intriguing, and yet talentless schemer of politics.

“ Like Paris ! ” said I, answering only the last question, and that not with the most scrupulous regard to truth. “ Can Madame de Balzac think of Paris, and not conceive the transport which must inspire a person entering it for the first time ? But I had something more endearing than a stranger’s interest to attach me to it ; I longed to express to my father’s friend, my gratitude for the interest which I venture to believe she on one occasion manifested towards me.”

“ Ah ! you mean my caution to you against that terrible De Montreuil. Yes, I trust I was of service to you *there*.”

And Madame de Balzac then proceeded to favour me with the whole history of the manner in which she had obtained the letter she had sent me, accom-

panied by a thousand anathemas against those *atroces Jésuites*, and a thousand eulogia on her own genius and virtues. I brought her from this subject, so interesting to herself, as soon as decorum would allow me : and I then made inquiry if she knew aught of Oswald, or could suggest any mode of obtaining intelligence respecting him. Madame de Balzac hated plain, blunt, blank questions, and she always travelled through a wilderness of parentheses, before she answered them. But at last I did ascertain her answer, and found it utterly unsatisfactory. She had never seen or heard any thing of Oswald since he had left her charged with her commission to me. I then questioned her respecting the character of the man, and found Mr. Marie Oswald had little to plume himself upon in that respect. He seemed, however, from her account of him, to be more a rogue than a villain ; and from two or three stories of his cowardice, which Madame de Balzac related, he appeared to me utterly incapable of a design so daring and systematic as that of which it pleased all persons who troubled themselves about my affairs, to suspect him.

Finding, at last, that no further information was to be gained on this point, I turned the conversation to Montreuil. I found from Madame de Balzac's very abuse of him, that he enjoyed a great reputation in the country, and a great favour at court. He had been early befriended by Father la Chaise, and he was now especially trusted and esteemed by the successor of that Jesuit—Le Tellier;—Le Tellier, that rigid and bigoted servant of Loyola—the sovereign of the King himself—the destroyer of the Port Royal, and the mock and terror of the bedevilled and persecuted Jansenists. Besides this, I learnt what has been before pretty clearly evident—viz.: that Montreuil was greatly in the confidence of the Chevalier, and that he was supposed already to have rendered essential service to the Stuart cause. His reputation had increased with every year, and was as great for private sanctity as for political talent.

When this information, given in a very different spirit from that in which I retail it, was over, Madame de Balzac observed—"Doubtless you will obtain a private audience with the King?"

“Is it possible, in his present age and infirmities?”

“It ought to be to the son of *Le Maréchal* Devereux.”

“I shall be happy to receive Madame’s instructions how to obtain the honour: her name would, I feel, be a greater passport to the royal presence, than that of a deceased soldier; and Venus’s cestus may obtain that grace, which would never be accorded to the truncheon of Mars!”

Was there ever so natural and so easy a compliment? My Venus of fifty smiled.

“You are mistaken, Count,” said she; “I have no interest at court: the Jesuits forbid that to a Jansenist; but I will speak this very day to the Bishop of Frejus: he is related to me, and will obtain so slight a boon for you with ease. He has just left his bishopric: you know how he hated it. Nothing could be pleasanter than his signing himself, in a letter to Cardinal Quirini—*‘Fleuri, évêque de Fréjus par l’indignation divine.’* The king does not like him much: but he is a good man on the whole, though Jesuitical: he shall introduce you.”

I expressed my gratitude for the favour, and hinted that possibly the relations of my father's first wife, the haughty and ancient house of La Tremouille, might save the Bishop of Fréjus from the pain of exerting himself on my behalf.

“You are very much mistaken,” answered Madame de Balzac: “priests point the road to court, as well as to heaven; and warriors and nobles have as little to do with the former, as they have with the latter, the unlucky Duc de Villers only excepted—a man whose ill fortune is enough to destroy all the laurels of France. *Ma foi!* I believe the *pauvre Duc* might rival in luck that Italian poet, who said, in a fit of despair, that if he had been bred a hatter, men would have been born without heads.”

And Madame de Balzac chuckled over this joke, till seeing that no farther news was to be gleaned from her, I made my adieu, and my departure.

Nothing could exceed the kindness manifested towards me by my father's early connexions. The circumstance of my accompanying Bolingbroke, joined to my age, and an address which, if not animated or gay, had not been acquired without some

youthful cultivation of the graces, gave me a sort of *éclat* as well as consideration. And Bolingbroke, who was only jealous of superiors in power, and who had no equals in any thing else, added greatly to my reputation by his panegyrics.

Every one sought me—and the attention of society at Paris would, to most, be worth a little trouble to repay. Perhaps, if I had liked it, I might have been the rage; but that vanity was over. I contented myself with being permitted into society as an observer, without a single wish to become the observed. When one has once outlived the ambition *de société*, I know not a greater affliction than an over-attention; and the Spectator did just what I should have done in a similar case, when he left his lodgings, “because he was asked every morning how he had slept.” In the immediate vicinity of the court, the king’s devotion, age, and misfortunes, threw a damp over society; but there were still some sparkling circles, who put the king out of the mode, and declared, that the defeats of his generals made capital subjects for epigrams. What a delicate and subtle air did hang over those *soirées*, where all that were

bright and lovely, and noble and gay, and witty and wise, were assembled in one brilliant cluster ! Imperfect as my rehearsals must be, I think the few pages I shall devote to a description of these glittering conversations, must still retain something of that original piquancy which the *soirées* of no other capital could rival or appreciate.

One morning, about a week after my interview with Madame de Balzac, I received a note from her, requesting me to visit her that day, and appointing the hour.

Accordingly I repaired to the house of the fair politician. I found her with a man in a clerical garb, and of a benevolent and prepossessing countenance. She introduced him to me as the Bishop of Fréjus, and he received me with an air very uncommon to his countrymen, viz., with an ease that seemed to result from real good nature, rather than artificial grace.

“ I shall feel,” said he, quietly, and without the least appearance of paying a compliment, “ very glad to mention your wish to his majesty ; and I have not the least doubt but that he will admit to his presence one who has such hereditary claims

on his notice. Madame de Maintenon, by the way, has charged me to present you to her, whenever you will give me the opportunity. She knew your admirable mother well, and, for her sake, wishes once to see you. You know, perhaps, Monsieur, that the extreme retirement of her life, renders this message from Madame de Maintenon, an unusual and rare honour."

I expressed my thanks ;—the bishop received them with a paternal rather than a courtier-like air, and appointed a day for me to attend him to the palace. We then conversed a short time upon indifferent matters, which, I observed, the good bishop took especial pains to preserve clear from French politics. He asked me, however, two or three questions about the state of parties in England—about finance and the national debt—about Ormond and Oxford ; and appeared to give the most close attention to my replies. He smiled once or twice, when his relation, Madame de Balzac, broke out into sarcasms against the Jesuits, which had nothing to do with the subjects in question.

" Ah, *ma chère cousine*," said he, " you flatter me by shewing, that you like me not as the poli-

tician, but the private relation—not as the Bishop of Fréjus, but as André de Fleury.”

Madame de Balzac smiled, and answered by a compliment. She was a politician for the kingdom, it is true, but she was also a politician for herself. She was far from exclaiming, with Pindar, “Thy business, O my city, I prefer willingly to my own.” Ah, there is a nice distinction between politics and policy, and Madame de Balzac knew it. The distinction is this : Politics is the art of being wise for others ! Policy is the art of being wise for oneself.

From Madame de Balzac’s I went to Bolingbroke. “I have just been offered the place of Secretary of State, by the English king on this side of the water,” said he ;—“I do not, however, yet like to commit myself so fully. And, indeed, I am not unwilling to have a little relaxation of pleasure, after all these dull and dusty travails of state. What say you to Boulainvilliers to-night—you are asked ?”

“Yes ! all the wits are to be there—Anthony Hamilton — and Fontenelle — young Arouet—Chaulieu, that charming old man. Let us go, and

polish away the wrinkles of our hearts. What cosmetics are to the face, wit is to the temper; and, after all, there is no wisdom like that which teaches us to forget."

"Come then," said Bolingbroke, rising, "we will lock up these papers, and take a melancholy drive, in order that we may enjoy mirth the better by and by."

CHAPTER V.

A Meeting of Wits—Conversation gone out to Supper in her Dress of Velvet and Jewels.

BOULAINVILLIERS! Comte de St. Saire! What will our great grandchildren think of that name? Fame is indeed a riddle! At the time I refer to, wit—learning—grace—all things that charm and enlighten—were supposed to centre in one word—*Boulainvilliers!* The good count had many rivals, it is true, but he had that exquisite tact peculiar to his countrymen, of making the very reputations of those rivals contribute to his own. And while he assembled them around him, the lustre of their

bons mots, though it emanated from themselves, was reflected upon him.

It was a pleasant, though not a costly apartment, in which we found our host. The room was sufficiently full of people, to allow scope and variety to one groupe of talkers, without being full enough to permit those little knots and coteries which are the destruction of literary society. An old man of about seventy, of a sharp, shrewd, yet polished and courtly expression of countenance, of a great gaiety of manner, which was now and then rather displeasingly contrasted by an abrupt affectation of dignity that, however, rarely lasted above a minute, and never withstood the shock of a *bon mot*, was the first person who accosted us. This old man was the wreck of the once celebrated Anthony Count Hamilton !

“ Well, my Lord,” said he to Bolingbroke, “ how do you like the weather at Paris ?—it is a little better than the merciless air of London—is it not ? ’Slife !—even in June, one could not go open-breasted in those regions of cold and catarrh—a very great misfortune, let me tell you, my Lord, if one’s cambric happened to be of a very delicate and

brilliant texture, and one wished to penetrate the inward folds of a lady's heart, by developing, to the best advantage, the exterior folds that covered his own."

"It is the first time," answered Bolingbroke, "that I ever heard so accomplished a courtier as Count Hamilton repine, with sincerity, that he could not bare his bosom to inspection."

"Ah!" cried Boulainvilliers, "but vanity makes a man shew much that discretion would conceal."

"*Au diable* with your discretion!" said Hamilton, "'tis a vulgar virtue. Vanity is a truly aristocratic quality, and every way fitted to a gentleman. Should I ever have been renowned for my exquisite lace and web-like cambric, if I had not been vain? Never, *mon cher*! I should have gone into a convent and worn sackcloth, and, from *Count Antoine*, I should have thickened into *Saint Anthony*."

"Nay," cried Lord Bolingbroke, "there is as much scope for vanity in sackcloth, as there is in cambric; for vanity is like the Irish ogling master in the Spectator, and if it teaches the playhouse to ogle by candle-light, it also teaches the church to ogle

by day! But, pardon me, Monsieur Chaulieu, how well you look! I see that the myrtle sheds its verdure, not only over your poetry, but the poet. And it is right that, to the modern Anacreon, who has bequeathed to Time a treasure it will never forego, Time itself should be gentle in return."

"Milord," answered Chaulieu, an old man who, though considerably past seventy, was animated, in appearance and manner, with a vivacity and life that would have done honour to a youth—"Milord, it was beautifully said by the Emperor Julian, that Justice retained the Graces in her vestibule. I see, now, that he should have substituted the word *Wisdom* for that of Justice."

"Come," cried Anthony Hamilton, "this will never do. Compliments are the dullest things imaginable. For God's sake let us leave panegyric to blockheads, and say something bitter to one another, or we shall die of *ennui*."

"*Vous avez raison*," said Boulainvilliers:—"Let us pick out some poor devil to begin with. Absent or present?—Decide which."

"Oh, absent," cried Chaulieu; "'tis a thousand times more piquant to slander than to rally! Let

us commence with his Majesty : Count Devereux, have you seen Madame Maintenon and her devout infant, since your arrival ?”

“ No !—the priests must be petitioned before the miracle is made public.”

“ What !” cried Chaulieu, “ would you insinuate that his Majesty’s piety is really nothing less than a miracle ?”

“ Impossible !” said Boulainvilliers, gravely,—“ piety is as natural to kings as flattery to their courtiers : are we not told that they are made in God’s own image !”

“ If that were true,” said Count Hamilton, somewhat profanely—“ if that were true, I should no longer deny the impossibility of Atheism !”

“ Fie, Count Hamilton,” said an old gentleman, in whom I recognised the great Huet, “ fie—wit should beware how it uses wings—its province is earth, not heaven.”

“ Nobody can better tell what wit is *not*, than the learned Abbé Huet !” answered Hamilton, with a mock air of respect.

“ Psha !” cried Chaulieu, “ I thought when we once gave the rein to satire it would carry us

pêle-mêle against one another. But in order to sweeten that drop of lemon-juice for you, my dear Huet, let me turn to Milord Bolingbroke, and ask him whether England can produce a scholar equal to Peter Huet, who in twenty years wrote notes to sixty-two volumes of Classics,* for the sake of a prince who never read a line in one of them?"

"We have some scholars," answered Bolingbroke; "but we certainly have no Huet. It is strange enough, but learning seems to me like a circle: it grows weaker the more it spreads. We now see many people capable of reading commentaries, but very few, indeed, capable of writing them."

"True," answered Huet; and in his reply he introduced the celebrated illustration which is at this day mentioned among his most felicitous *bons-mots*. "Scholarship, formerly the most difficult and unaided enterprise of Genius, has now been made, by the very toils of the first mariners, but an easy and common-place voyage of leisure. But who would compare the great men, whose very difficulties not only proved their ardour, but brought them the patience and the courage which

* The Delphin Classics.

alone are the parents of a genuine triumph, to the indolent loiterers of the present day, who having little of difficulty to conquer, have nothing of glory to attain? For my part, there seems to me the same difference between a scholar of our days and one of the past, as there is between Christopher Columbus and the master of a packet-boat from Calais to Dover!"

"But," cried Anthony Hamilton, taking a pinch of snuff, with the air of a man about to utter a witty thing—"but what have we—we spirits of the world, not imps of the closet,"—and he glanced at Huet—"to do with scholarship? All the waters of Castaly which we want to pour into our brain, are such as will flow the readiest to our tongue."

"In short, then," said I, "you would assert that all a friend cares for in one's head is the quantity of talk in it?"

"Precisely, my dear Count," said Hamilton, seriously; "and to that maxim I will add another applicable to the opposite sex. All that a mistress cares for in one's heart is the quantity of love in it."

“What ! are generosity, courage, honour, to go for nothing, with our mistress, then ?” cried Chau-lieu.

“No ; for she will believe, if you are a passionate lover, that you have all those virtues ; and if not, she won’t believe that you have one.”

“Ah ! it was a pretty court of love in which the friend and biographer of Count Grammont learnt the art !” said Bolingbroke.

“We believed so at the time, my lord ; but there are as many changes in the fashion of making love as there are in that of making dresses. Honour me, Count Devereux, by using my snuff-box, and then looking at the lid.”

“It is the picture of Charles the Second, which adorns it—is it not ?”

“No, Count Devereux, it is the diamonds which adorn it. His majesty’s face I thought very beautiful while he was living ; but now, on my conscience, I consider it the ugliest phiz I ever beheld. But I pointed your notice to the picture because we were talking of love ; and Old Rowley believed that he could make it better than any one else. All his courtiers had the same opinion of

themselves; and I dare say the *beaux garçons* of Queen Anne's reign would say, that not one of King Charley's gang knew what love was. Oh! 'tis a strange circle of revolutions, that love! Like the earth, it always changes, and yet always has the same materials."

"*L'Amour — l'amour — toujours l'amour*, with Count Anthony Hamilton!" said Boulainvilliers. "He is always on that subject; and, *sacre bleu!* when he was younger, I am told he was like Cacus, the son of Vulcan, and breathed nothing but flames."

"You flatter me," said Hamilton. "Solve me now a knotty riddle, my Lord Bolingbroke. Why does a young man think it the greatest compliment to be thought wise, while an old man thinks it the greatest compliment to be told he has been foolish?"

"Is love foolish, then?" said Lord Bolingbroke.

"Can you doubt it?" answered Hamilton; "it makes a man think more of another than himself! I know not a greater proof of folly!"

"Ah—*mon aimable ami*"—cried Chaulieu;

“you are the wickedest witty person I know. I cannot help loving your language, while I hate your sentiments.”

“My language is my own—my sentiments are those of all men,” answered Hamilton; “but are we not, by the by, to have young *Arouet* here to-night? What a charming person he is!”

“Yes,” said Boulainvilliers. “He said he should be late; and I expect Fontenelle, too, but *he* will not come before supper. I found Fontenelle this morning, conversing with my cook on the best manner of dressing asparagus. I asked him the other day, what writer, ancient or modern, had ever given him the most sensible pleasure? After a little pause, the excellent old man said—‘Daphnus’—‘Daphnus!’ repeated I—‘who the devil is he?’ ‘Why,’ answered Fontenelle, with tears of gratitude in his benevolent eyes, ‘I had some hypochondriacal ideas, that suppers were unwholesome; and Daphnus is an ancient physician, who asserts the contrary; and declares,—think, my friend, what a charming theory!—that the moon is a great assistant of the digestion!’”

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed the *Abbé de Chau-lieu*. “How like Fontenelle! what an anomalous creature ’tis! He has the most kindness and the least feeling of any man I ever knew. Let Hamilton find a pithier description for him if he can!”

Whatever reply the friend of the *preux Gram-mont* might have made, was prevented by the entrance of a young man of about twenty-one.

In person he was small, slight, and very thin. There was a certain affectation of polite address in his manner and mien, which did not quite become him; and though he was received by the old wits with great cordiality, and on a footing of perfect equality; yet, the inexpressible air which denotes birth, was both pretended to, and wanting. This, perhaps, was however owing to the ordinary inexperience of youth; which, if not awkwardly bashful, is generally awkward in its assurance. Whatever its cause, the impression vanished directly he entered into conversation. I do not think I ever encountered a man so brilliantly, yet so easily witty. He had but little of the studied allusion—the antithetical point—the

classic metaphor, which chiefly characterize the wits of my day. On the contrary, it was an exceeding and *naïve* simplicity, which gave such unrivalled charm and piquancy to his conversation. And while I have not scrupled to stamp on my pages some faint imitation of the peculiar dialogue of other eminent characters, I must confess myself utterly unable to convey the smallest idea of his method of making words irresistible. Contenting my efforts, therefore, with describing his personal appearance—interesting, because that of the most striking literary character it has been my lot to meet—I shall omit his share in the remainder of the conversation I am rehearsing, and beg the reader to recal that passage in Tacitus, in which the great historian says, that in the funeral of Junia, “the images of Brutus and Cassius outshone all the rest, from the very circumstance of their being the sole ones excluded from the rite.”

The countenance, then, of Marie Francis Arouet, (since so celebrated under the name of Voltaire.) was plain in feature, but singularly striking in effect; its vivacity was the very perfection of what

Steele once happily called “physiognomical eloquence.” His eyes were dark, fiery rather than bright, and so restless that they never dwelt in the same place for a moment;* his mouth was at once the worst and the most peculiar feature of his face: it betokened humour, it is true; but it also betrayed malignancy—nor did it ever smile without sarcasm. Though flattering to those present, his words against the absent, uttered by that bitter and curling lip, mingled with your pleasure at their wit a little fear at their causticity. I believe no one, be he as bold, as callous, or as faultless as human nature can be, could be one hour with that man and not feel apprehension. Ridicule, so lavish, yet so true to the mark—so wanton, yet so seemingly just—so bright, that while it wandered round its target, in apparent, though terrible playfulness, it burned into the spot, and engraved there a brand, and a token indelible and per-

* The reader will remember that this is a description of Voltaire as a very young man. I do not know any where a more impressive, almost a more ghastly contrast, than that which the pictures of Voltaire, grown old, present to Largilliere’s picture of him at the age of twenty-four; and he was somewhat younger than twenty-four at the time of which the Count now speaks.—ED.

petual ;—this no man could witness, when darted towards another, and feel safe for himself. The very caprice and levity of the jester seemed more perilous, because less to be calculated upon, than a systematic principle of bitterness or satire. Bolingbroke compared him, not unaptly, to a child who has possessed himself of Jupiter's bolts, and who makes use of those bolts in sport, which a God would only have used in wrath.

Arouet's forehead was not remarkable for height, but it was nobly and grandly formed, and, contradicting that of the mouth, wore a benevolent expression. Though so young, there was already a wrinkle on the surface of the front, and a prominence on the eyebrow which shewed that the wit and the fancy of his conversation were, if not regulated, at least contrasted, by more thoughtful and lofty characteristics of mind. At the time I write, this man has obtained a high throne among the powers of the lettered world. What he may yet be, it is in vain to guess : he may be all that is great and good, or—the reverse ; but I cannot but believe that his career is only begun. Such men are born monarchs of the mind ; they may be benefac-

tors or tyrants : in either case, they are greater than the kings of the physical empire, because they defy armies and laugh at the intrigues of state. From themselves only come the balance of their power, the laws of their government, and the boundaries of their realm.

We sat down to supper. "Count Hamilton," said Boulainvilliers, "are we not a merry set for such old fellows? Why, excepting Arouet, Milord Bolingbroke, and Count Devereux, there is scarcely one of us under seventy. Where, but at Paris, would you see *bons vivans* of our age? *Vivent la joie!—la bagatelle!—l'amour!*"

"*Et le vin de Champagne,*" cried Chaulieu, filling his glass; "but what is there strange in our merriment? Philemon, the comic poet, laughed at ninety-seven. May we all do the same!"

"You forget," cried Bolingbroke, "that Philemon died of the laughing."

"Yes," said Hamilton; "but, if I remember right, it was at seeing an ass eat figs. Let us vow, therefore, never to keep company with asses!"

"Bravo, Count," said Boulainvilliers, "you

have put the true moral on the story. Let us swear by the ghost of Philemon, that we will never laugh at an ass's jokes—practical or verbal."

"Then we must always be serious, except when we are with each other," cried Chaulieu. "Oh, I would sooner take my chance of dying prematurely at ninety-seven, than consent to such a vow!"

"Fontenelle," cried our host, "you are melancholy. What is the matter?"

"I mourn for the weakness of human nature," answered Fontenelle, with an air of patriarchal philanthropy. "I told your cook three times about the asparagus; and now—taste it. I told him not to put too much sugar, and he has put none. Thus it is with mankind—ever in extremes, and consequently ever in error! Thus it was that Luther said, so felicitously and so truly, that the human mind was like a drunken peasant on horseback—prop it on one side, and it falls on the other."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Chaulieu, "*le pauvre Secrétaire de l'Académie des Sciences!* Who would have thought one could have found so much

morality in a plate of asparagus ! Taste this *sal-sifs*."

" Pray, Hamilton," said Huet, " what *jeu de mots* was that you made yesterday at Madame D'Epernonville's, which gained you such applause ?"

" Ah, repeat it, Count," cried Boulainvilliers ; " 'twas the most classical thing I have heard for a long time."

" Why," said Hamilton, laying down his knife and fork, and preparing himself by a large draught of the champagne—" why, Madame D'Epernonville appeared without her *tour* ; you know, Lord Bolingbroke, that *tour* is the polite name for false hair. ' *Ah, sacre !*' cried her brother, courteously, ' *ma sœur, que vous êtes laide aujourd'hui—vous n'avez pas votre tour !*' ' *Voilà, pourquoi elle n'est pas si-belle (Cybele),*' answered I.

" Excellent ! famous !" cried we all, except Huet, who seemed to regard the punster with a very disrespectful eye. Hamilton saw it. " You do not think, Monsieur Huet, that there is wit

in these *jeux de mots*—perhaps you do not admire wit at all ?”

“ Yes, I admire wit as I do the wind. When it shakes the trees, it is fine ; when it cools the wave, it is refreshing ; when it steals over flowers, it is enchanting ; but when, Monsieur Hamilton, it whistles through the keyhole, it is unpleasant.”

“ The very worst illustration I ever heard,” said Hamilton, coolly. “ Keep to your classics my dear Abbé. When Jupiter edited the work of Peter Huet, he did with wit, as Peter Huet did with Lucan, when he edited the classics—he was afraid it might do mischief, and so left it out altogether.”

“ Let us drink !” cried Chaulieu ; “ let us drink !” and the conversation was turned again.

“ What is that you say of Tacitus, Huet ?” said Boulainvilliers.

“ That his wisdom arose from his malignancy,” answered Huet. “ He is a perfect penetrator* into human vices ; but knows nothing of human

* A remark similar to this the reader will probably remember in the Huetiana, and will I hope, agree with me in thinking it shewy and untrue.—ED.

virtues. Do you think that a good man would dwell so clingingly on what is evil? Believe me—no! A man cannot write much and well upon virtue without being virtuous, nor enter minutely and profoundly into the causes of vice without being vicious himself.”

“It is true,” said Hamilton; “and your remark, which affects to be so deep, is but a natural corollary from the hacknied maxim, that from experience comes wisdom.”

“But, for my part,” said Boulainvilliers, “I think Tacitus is not so invariably the analyser of vice as you would make him. Look at the Agricola and the Germania.”

“Ah! the Germany, above all things!” cried Hamilton, dropping a delicious morsel of *sanglier*, in its way from hand to mouth, in his hurry to speak. “Of course, the historian, Boulainvilliers, advocates the Germany, from its mention of the origin of the feudal system—that incomparable bundle of excellencies, which Le Comte de Boulainvilliers has declared to be *le chef d'œuvre de l'esprit humain*; and which the same gentleman regrets, in the most pathetic terms, no longer

exists in order that the seigneur may feed upon *des gros morceaux, de bœuf demi-cru*, may hang up half his peasants *pour encourager les autres*, and ravish the daughters of the defunct *pour leur donner quelque consolation.*"

"Seriously, though," said the old Abbé de Chaulieu, with a twinkling eye, "*the last* mentioned evil, my dear Hamilton, was not without a little alloy of good."

"Yes," said Hamilton, "if it was only the daughters; but perhaps the seigneur was not too scrupulous with regard to the wives."

"Ah! shocking, shocking!" cried Chaulieu, solemnly. "Adultery is, indeed, an atrocious crime. I am sure I would most conscientiously cry out with the honest preacher—'Adultery, my children, is the blackest of sins. I do declare, that I would rather have *ten* virgins in love with me than *one* married woman!'"

We all laughed at this enthusiastic burst of virtue from the chaste Chaulieu. And *Arouet* turned our conversation towards the ecclesiastical dissensions between Jesuits and Jansenists, that then agitated the kingdom. It was then that Bolingbroke used that magnificent illustration, so

significant of all those ecclesiastical quarrels, in which indulging the worst passions is termed zeal for the best cause; and we prove beyond a doubt how intensely we love God, by shewing with what delightful animosity we can hate one another! “The priests,” said Bolingbroke, “remind me of the nurses of Jupiter—they make a great clamour, in order to drown the voice of their God.”

“Bravissimo!” cried Hamilton. “Is it not a pity, messieurs, that my Lord Bolingbroke was not a Frenchman? He is almost clever enough to be one.”

“If he would drink a little more, he would be,” cried Chaulieu, who was glowing gloriously *plein de boisson*.

“What say you, Morton?” exclaimed Bolingbroke; “must we not drink these gentlemen under the table for the honour of our country?”

“A challenge! a challenge!” cried Chaulieu. “I march first to the field!”

“Conquest or death!” shouted Bolingbroke. And the rites of Minerva were forsaken for those of Bacchus.

CHAPTER VI.

A Court, Courtiers, and a King.

I THINK it was the second day after this “feast of reason” that Lord Bolingbroke deemed it advisable to retire to Lyons till his plans of conduct were ripened into decision. We took an affectionate leave of each other ; but before we parted, and after he had discussed his own projects of ambition, we talked a little upon mine. Although I was a Catholic and a pupil of Montreuil, although I had fled from England, and had nothing to expect from the House of Hanover, I was by no means favourably disposed towards the Chevalier and his cause. I wonder if this avowal will seem odd to

Englishmen of the next century.—To Englishmen of the present one, a Roman Catholic, and a lover of priestcraft and tyranny, are two words for the same thing; as if we could not murmur at tithes and taxes—insecurity of property—or arbitrary legislation, just as sourly as any other Christian community. No! I never loved the cause of the Stuarts—unfortunate, and therefore interesting, as the Stuarts were: by a very stupid, and yet uneffaceable confusion of ideas, I confounded it with the cause of Montreuil, and I hated the latter enough to dislike the former: I fancy all party principles are formed much in the same manner. I frankly told Bolingbroke my disinclination to the Chevalier.

“Between ourselves be it spoken,” said he, “there is but little to induce a wise man, in *your* circumstances, to join James the Third. I would advise you rather to take advantage of your father’s reputation at the French court, and enter into the same service he did. Things wear a dark face in England for you, and a bright one everywhere else.”

“I have already,” said I, “in my own mind,

perceived and weighed the advantages of entering into the service of Louis. But he is old—he cannot live long. People now pay court to parties—not to the king. Which party, think you, is the best—that of Madame de Maintenon ?”

“Nay, I think not ; she is a cold friend, and never asks favours of Louis for any of her family. A bold game might be played by attaching yourself to the Duchesse D’Orleans (the Duke’s mother). She is at daggers-drawn with Maintenon, it is true, and she is a violent, haughty, and coarse woman ; but she has wit, talent, strength of mind, and will zealously serve any person of high birth, who pays her respect. But she can do nothing for you till the king’s death, and then only on the chance of her son’s power. But—let me see—you say Fleuri, the bishop of Fréjus, is to introduce you to Madame de Maintenon ?”

“Yes ; and has appointed the day after to-morrow for that purpose.”

“Well, then, make close friends with him—you will not find it difficult ; he has a delightful address, and if you get hold of his weak points, you may win his confidence. Mark me—Fleuri has no

faux-brillant, no genius, indeed, of very prominent order ; but he is one of those soft and smooth minds which, in a crisis like the present, when parties are contending and princes wrangling, always slip silently and unobtrusively into one of the best places. Keep in with Fréjus—you cannot do wrong by it—although you must remember that at present he is in ill odour with the king, and you need not go with *him twice* to Versailles. But, above all, when you are introduced to Louis, do not forget that you cannot please him better than by appearing awe-stricken.”

Such was Bolingbroke’s parting advice. The Bishop of *Fréjus* carried me with him (on the morning we had appointed) to Versailles. What a magnificent work of royal imagination is that palace ! I know not in any epic a grander idea than terming the avenues which lead to it the roads to Spain, to Holland, &c. In London, they would have been the roads to Chelsea and Pentonville !

As we were driving slowly along in the bishop’s carriage, I had ample time for conversation with that personage, who has since, as the Cardinal de Fleuri, risen to so high a pitch of power. He

certainly has in him very little of the great man ; nor do I know any where so striking an instance of this truth—that in that game of honours which is played at courts, we obtain success less by our talents than our tempers. He laughed, with a graceful turn of badinage, at the political peculiarities of Madame de Balzac : and said that it was not for the uppermost party to feel resentment at the chafings of the under one. Sliding from this topic, he then questioned me as to the gaieties I had witnessed. I gave him a description of the party at Boulainvilliers'. He seemed much interested in this, and shewed more shrewdness than I should have given him credit for, in discussing the various characters of the *literati* of the day. After some general conversation on works of fiction, he artfully glided into treating on those of statistics and politics, and I then caught a sudden but thorough insight into the depths of his policy. I saw that while he affected to be indifferent to the difficulties and puzzles of state, he lost no opportunity of gaining every particle of information respecting them ; and that he made conversation, in which he was skilled, a vehicle for acquiring



that knowledge which he had not the force of mind to create from his own intellect, or to work out from the *written* labours of others. If this made him a superficial statesman, it made him a prompt one ; and there was never so lucky a minister with so little trouble to himself.*

As we approached the end of our destination, we talked of the king. On this subject he was jealously cautious. But I gleaned from him, despite of his sagacity, that it was high time to make all use of one's acquaintance with Madame de Maintenon that one could be enabled to do ; and that it was so difficult to guess the exact places in which power would rest after the death of the old king, that supineness and silence made at present the most profound policy.

As we alighted from the carriage, and I first set my foot within the palace, I could not but feel involuntarily, yet powerfully impressed, with the sense of the spirit of the place. I was in the precincts of that mighty court which had gathered

* At his death appeared the following punning epigram :

"Floruit sine fructu

"Defloruit sine luctu."—ED.

into one dazzling focus all the rays of genius which half a century had emitted ; the court at which Time had passed at once from the morn of civilization into its full noon and glory ; the court of Condé and Turenne—of Villars and of Tourville ;—the court where, over the wit of Grammont, the profusion of Fouquet, the fatal genius of Louvois, (fatal to humanity and to France,)—Love, real Love, had not disdained to shed its pathos and its truth, and to consecrate the hollow pageantries of royal pomp, with the tenderness, the beauty, and the repentance of La Vallière. Still over that scene hung the spells of a genius which, if artificial and cold, was also vast, stately, and magnificent—a genius which had swelled in the rich music of Racine—which had raised the nobler spirit and the freer thought of Pierre Corneille,*—which had given edge to the polished weapon of Boileau—which had lavished over the bright page of Molière—Molière, more wonderful than all—a knowledge of the humours and the

* Rigidly speaking, Corneille belongs to a period earlier than that of Louis XIV., though he has been included in the æra formed by that reign.—ED.

hearts of men, which no dramatist, save Shakespeare, has surpassed. Within those walls still glowed, though now waxing faint and dim, the fame of that monarch, who had enjoyed, at least, till his later day, the fortune of Augustus, unsullied by the crimes of Octavius. Nine times, since the sun of that monarch rose, had the Papal Chair received a new occupant !—Six sovereigns had reigned over the Ottoman hordes !—The fourth emperor, since the birth of the same era, bore sway over Germany !—Five Czars, from Michel Romanoff to the Great Peter, had held, over their enormous territory, the precarious tenure of their iron power !—Six kings had borne the painful cincture of the English crown ;* two of those kings had been fugitives to that court—to the son of the last it was an asylum at that moment.

What wonderful changes had passed over the face of Europe during that single reign ! In England only, what a vast leap in the waste of events, from the reign of the First Charles to that of George

* Besides Cromwell ; viz. Charles I., Charles II., James II., William and Mary, Anne, George I.

the First !—I still lingered—I still gazed, as these thoughts, linked to one another in an electric chain, flashed over me !—I still paused on the threshold of those stately halls which Nature herself had been conquered to rear !—Where, through the whole earth, could I find so meet a symbol for the character and the name which that sovereign would leave to posterity, as this palace itself afforded ?—A gorgeous monument of regal state raised from a desert—crowded alike with empty pageantries and illustrious names—a prodigy of elaborate artifice, grand in its whole effect—petty in its small details ; a solitary oblation to a splendid selfishness, and most remarkable for the revenues which it exhausted and the poverty by which it is surrounded !

Fleuri, with his usual urbanity, an urbanity that, on a great scale, would have been benevolence, had hitherto indulged me in my emotions ; he now laid his hand upon my arm, and recalled me to myself. Before I could apologise for my abstraction, the bishop was accosted by an old man of evident rank, but of a countenance more strikingly demonstrative of the little cares of a mere

courtier than any I ever beheld.—“What news, Monsieur le Marquis?” said Fleuri, smiling.

“Oh! the greatest imaginable! the king talks of receiving the Danish minister on *Thursday*, which, you know, is his day of *domestic* business! What *can* this portend? Besides,” and here the speaker’s voice lowered into a whisper, “I am told by the Duc de la Rochefoucault, that the king intends, out of all ordinary rule and practice, to take physic to-morrow—I can’t believe it—no, I positively can’t;—but don’t let this go farther!”

“Heaven forbid!” answered Fleuri, bowing, and the courtier passed on to whisper his intelligence to others. “Who’s that gentleman?” I asked.

“The Marquis de Dangeau,” answered Fleuri; “a nobleman of great quality, who keeps a diary of all the king says and does. It will perhaps be a posthumous publication, and will shew the world of what importance nothings can be made. I dare say, Count, you have already, in England, seen enough of a court to know, that there are some people who are as human echoes, and have no existence except in the noise occasioned by another.”

I took care that my answer should not be a witicism, lest Fleuri should think I was attempting to rival him ; and so we passed on in an excellent humour with each other.

We mounted the grand staircase, and came to an anti-chamber, which, though costly and rich, was not remarkably conspicuous for splendour. Here the bishop requested me to wait for a moment. Accordingly, I amused myself with looking over some engravings of different saints. Meanwhile my companion passed through another door, and I was alone.

After an absence of nearly ten minutes, he returned. “ Madame de Maintenon,” said he, in a whisper, “ is but poorly to-day. However, she has eagerly consented to see you—follow me !”

So saying, the ecclesiastical courtier passed on, with myself at his heels. We came to the door of a second chamber, at which Fleuri *scraped* gently. We were admitted, and found therein three ladies, one of whom was reading, a second laughing, and a third yawning, and entered into another chamber, where, alone, and seated by the window, in a large chair, with one foot on a stool, in an attitude that

rather reminded me of my mother, and which seems to me a favourite position with all devotees, we found an old woman without rouge, plainly dressed, with spectacles on her nose, and a large book on a little table before her. With a most profound salutation, Frejus approached, and taking me by the hand, said :

“ Will Madame suffer me to present to her the Count Devereux ? ”

Madame de Maintenon, with an air of great meekness and humility, bowed a return to the salutation. “ The son of Madame la Maréchale de Devereux will always be most welcome to me ! ” Then, turning towards us, she pointed to two stools, and, while we were seating ourselves, said —

“ And how did you leave my excellent friend ? ”

“ When, Madam, I last saw my mother, which is now nearly a year ago, she was in health, and consoling herself for the advance of years by that tendency to wean the thoughts, from this world, which (in her own language) is the divinest comfort of old age ! ”

“ Admirable woman ! ” said Madame de Maintenon, casting down her eyes ; “ such are, indeed,

the sentiments in which I recognize the Maréchale. And how does her beauty wear? Those golden locks, and blue eyes, and that snowy skin, are not yet, I suppose, wholly changed for an adequate compensation of the beauties within!"

"Time, Madame, has been gentle with her; and I have often thought, though never, perhaps, more strongly than at this moment, that there is in those divine studies, which bring calm and light to the mind, something which preserves and embalms, as it were, the beauty of the body."

A faint blush passed over the face of the devotee. No, no—not even at eighty years of age is a compliment to a woman's beauty misplaced! There was a slight pause. I thought that respect forbade me to break it.

"His majesty," said Fréjus, in the tone of one who is sensible that he encroaches a little, and does it with consequent reverence—"his majesty, I hope, is well."

"God be thanked, yes, as well as we can expect. It is now nearly the hour in which his majesty awaits your personal inquiries."

Fleuri bowed as he answered—

“The king, then, will receive us to-day? My young companion is very desirous to see the greatest monarch, and consequently the greatest man, of the age.”

“The desire is natural,” said Madame de Maintenon; and, then turning to me, she asked if I had yet seen king James III.

I took care, in my answer, to express that even if I had resolved to make that stay in Paris which allowed me to pay my respects to him at all, I should have deemed that both duty and inclination led me, in the first instance, to offer my homage to one who was both the benefactor of my father, and the monarch whose realms afforded me protection.

“You have not, then,” said Madame de Maintenon, “decided on the length of your stay in France?”

“No,” said I—and my answer was regulated by my desire to see how far I might rely on the services of one who expressed herself so warm a friend of that excellent woman, Madame la Maréchale—“No, Madame. France is the country of my birth, if England is that of my parentage ;

and could I hope for some portion of that royal favour which my father enjoyed, I would rather claim it as the home of my hopes than the refuge of my exile. But"—and I stopped short purposely.

The old lady looked at me very earnestly through her spectacles for one moment, and then, hemming twice with a little embarrassment, again remarked to Fréjus, that the time for seeing the king was nearly arrived. Fréjus, whose policy at that period was very like that of the concealed queen, and who was, besides, far from desirous of introducing any new claimants on Madame de Maintenon's official favour, though he might not object to introduce them to her private friendship, was not slow in taking the hint. He rose, and I was forced to follow his example.

Madame de Maintenon thought she might safely indulge in a little cordiality when I was just on the point of leaving her, and accordingly blest me, and gave me her hand, which I kissed very devoutly. An extremely pretty hand it was, too, notwithstanding the good queen's age. We then retired, and repassing the three ladies, who were

now all yawning, repaired to the king's apartments.

“What think you of Madame?” said Fréjus.

“What can I think of her,” said I, cautiously, “but that greatness seems in her to take its noblest form—that of simplicity?”

“True,” rejoined Fréjus, “never was there so meek a mind joined to so lowly a carriage! Do you remark any trace of former beauty?”

“Yes, indeed, there is much that is soft in her countenance, and much that is still regular in her features; but what struck me most was the pensive and even sad tranquillity that rests upon her face when she is silent.”

“The expression betrays the mind,” answered Fleuri; “and the curse of the great is ennui.”

“Of the great in station,” said I, “but not necessarily of the great in mind. I have heard that the Bishop of Fréjus, notwithstanding his rank and celebrity, employs every hour to the advantage of others, and consequently without tedium to himself.”

“Aha!” said Fleuri, smiling gently, and patting my cheek; “see, now, if the air of palaces is

not absolutely prolific of pretty speeches." And, before I could answer, we were in the apartments of the king.

Leaving me awhile to cool my heels in a gallery, filled with the butterflies who bask in the royal sunshine, Frejus then disappeared among the crowd; he was scarcely gone when I was agreeably surprised by seeing Count Hamilton approach towards me.

"*Mort diable !*" said he, shaking me by the hand, *à l'Anglaise*; "I am really delighted to see any one here who does not insult my sins with his superior excellence. Eh, now, look round this apartment for a moment! Whether would you believe yourself at the court of a great king, or the levée of a Roman cardinal? Whom see you chiefly? Gallant soldiers, with worn brows and glittering weeds; wise statesmen, with ruin to Austria and defiance to Rome in every wrinkle; gay nobles in costly robes, and with the bearing that so nicely teaches mirth to be dignified and dignity to be merry? No! cassock and hat, rosary and gown, decking sly, demure, hypocritical faces, flit, and stalk, and sadden round us. It seems to me,"

continued the witty Count, in a lower whisper, as if the old king, having fairly buried his glory at Ramilies and Blenheim, had summoned all these good gentry to sing psalms over it ! But are you waiting for a private audience ?”

“ Yes, under the auspices of the Bishop of Fréjus.”

“ You might have chosen a better guide—the king has been too much teased about him,” rejoined Hamilton ; “ and now, that we are talking of him, I will shew you a singular instance of what good manners can do at court, in preference to good abilities. You observe yon quiet, modest-looking man, with a sensible countenance, and a clerical garb ; you observe how he edges away when any one approaches to accost him ; and how, from his extreme disesteem of himself, he seems to inspire every one with the same sentiment. Well, that man is a namesake of Fleuri’s, the prior of *Argenteuil* ; he has come here, I suppose, for some particular and temporary purpose, since, in reality, he has left the court. Well, that worthy priest—do remark his bow ; did you ever see any thing so awkward ?—is one of the most learned divines that the

church can boast of? he is as immeasurably superior to the smooth-faced Bishop of Fréjus as Louis the Fourteenth is to my old friend Charles the Second. He has had equal opportunities with the said bishop; been preceptor to the princes of Conti, and the Count de Vermandois; and yet, I will wager that he lives and dies a tutor—a book-worm—and a prior; while t'other Fleuri, without a particle of merit, but of the most superficial order, governs already kings through their mistresses, kingdoms through the kings, and may, for aught I know, expand into a prime minister, and ripen into a cardinal."

"Nay," said I, smiling, "there is little chance of so exalted a lot for the worthy bishop."

"Pardon me," interrupted Hamilton, "I am an old courtier, and look steadily on the game I no longer play. Suppleness, united with art, may do any thing in a court like this; and the smooth and unelevated craft of a Fleuri may win even to the same height as the deep wiles of the glittering Mazarin, or the superb genius of the imperious Richelieu."

"Hist!" said I, "the bishop has reappeared

Who is that old priest, with a fine countenance, and an address that will, at least, please you better than that of the prior of *Argenteuil*, who has just stopped our episcopal courtier?"

"What! do you not know? It is the most celebrated preacher of the day—the great Massillon. It is said that that handsome person goes a great way towards winning converts among the *dames de la cour*; it is certain, at least, that when Massillon first entered the profession, he was to the soul something like the spear of Achilles to the body; and though very efficacious in healing the wounds of conscience, was equally ready, in the first instance, to inflict them."

"Ah," said I, "see the malice of wit; and see, above all, how much more ready one is to mention a man's frailties than to enlarge upon his virtues."

"To be sure," answered Hamilton, coolly, and patting his snuff-box—"to be sure, we old people like history better than fiction; and frailty is certain, while virtue is always doubtful."

"Don't judge of all people," said I, "by your

experience among the courtiers of Charles the Second."

"Right," said Hamilton. "Providence never assembled so many rascals together before, without hanging them. And he would, indeed, be a bad judge of human nature who estimated the characters of men in general by the heroes of Newgate and the victims of Tyburn. But your bishop approaches. Adieu!"

"What!" said Fleuri, joining me and saluting Hamilton, who had just turned to depart, "what, Count Antoine! Does anything but whim bring you here to-day?"

"No," answered Hamilton; "I am only here for the same purpose as the poor go to the temples of Caitan—to *inhale the steam of those good things which I see the priests devour.*"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the good-natured bishop, not in the least disconcerted; and Count Hamilton, congratulating himself on his *bon mot*, turned away.

"I have spoken to his Most Christian Majesty," said the bishop: "he is willing, as he before ordained, to admit you to his presence. The Duc

de Maine is with the king, as also some other members of the royal family ; but you will consider this a private audience."

I expressed my gratitude—we moved on—the doors of an apartment were thrown open—and I saw myself in the presence of Louis XIV.

The room was partially darkened. In the centre of it, on a large sofa, reclined the king ; he was dressed (though this I rather remembered than noted) in a coat of black velvet, slightly embroidered ; his vest was of white satin ; he wore no jewels nor orders, for it was only on grand or gala days that he displayed personal pomp. At some little distance from him stood three members of the royal family—them I never regarded—all my attention was bent upon the king. My temperament is not that on which greatness, or indeed any external circumstances make much impression, but, as following, at a little distance, the Bishop of Fréjus, I approached the royal person, I must confess that Bolingbroke had scarcely need to have cautioned me not to appear too self-possessed. Perhaps, had I seen that great monarch in his *beaux jours*—in the plenitude of his power—his glory—

the dazzling and meridian splendour of his person—his court—and his renown, pride might have made me more on my guard against too great, or at least, too apparent an impression; but the many reverses of that magnificent sovereign—reverses in which he had shewn himself more great than in all his previous triumphs and earlier successes; his age—his infirmities—the very clouds round the setting sun—the very howls of joy at the expiring lion—all were calculated, in my mind, to deepen respect into reverence, and tincture reverence itself with awe. I saw before me not only the majesty of Louis-le-Grand, but that of misfortune, of weakness, of infirmity, and of age; and I forgot at once in that reflection, what otherwise would have blunted my sentiments of deference, viz. the crimes of his ministers, and the exactions of his reign! Endeavouring to collect my mind from an embarrassment which surprised myself, I lifted my eyes towards the king, and saw a countenance where the trace of the superb beauty for which his manhood had been celebrated, still lingered, broken, not destroyed, and borrowing a dignity even more imposing from the marks of encroach-

ing years, and from the evident exhaustion of suffering and disease.

Fleuri said, in a low tone, something which my ear did not catch. There was a pause—only a moment's pause ; and then, in a voice, the beauty of which I had hitherto deemed exaggerated, the king spoke ; and in that voice there was something so kind and encouraging, that I felt reassured at once. Perhaps its tone was not the less conciliating from the evident effect which the royal presence had produced upon me.

“ You have given us, Count Devereux,” said the king, “ a pleasure which we are glad, in person, to acknowledge to you. And it has seemed to us fitting that the country in which your brave father acquired his fame should also be the asylum of his son.”

“ Sire,” answered I, “ Sire, it shall not be my fault if that country is not henceforth my own : and in inheriting my father's name, I inherit also his gratitude and his ambition.”

“ It is well said, Sir,” said the king ; and I once more raised my eyes, and perceived that his were bent upon me. “ It is well said,” he repeated,

after a short pause; “and in granting to you this audience, we were not unwilling to hope that you were desirous to attach yourself to our court. The times do not require” (here I thought the old king’s voice was not quite so firm as before) “the manifestation of your zeal in the same career as that in which your father gained laurels to France and to himself. But we will not neglect to give employment to your abilities, if not to your sword.”

“That sword which was given to me, Sire,” said I, “by your Majesty, shall be ever drawn (against all nations but one) at your command; and in being your Majesty’s petitioner for future favours, I only seek some channel through which to evince my gratitude for the past.”

“We do not doubt,” said Louis, “that whatever *ingrats* we may make by testifying our good pleasure on your behalf, *you* will not be among the number.” The king here made a slight, but courteous inclination, and turned round. The observant Bishop of Fréjus, who had retired to a little distance, and who knew that the king never liked talking more than he could help it, gave me

a signal. I obeyed, and backed, with all due deference, out of the royal presence.

So closed my interview with Louis XIV. Although his Majesty did not indulge in prolixity, I spoke of him for a long time afterwards as the most eloquent of men. Believe me, there is no orator like a king; one word from a royal mouth stirs the heart more than Demosthenes could have done. There was a deep moral in that custom of the ancients, by which the Goddess of Persuasion was always represented *with a diadem on her head*.

CHAPTER VII.

Reflections—A Soirée—The Appearance of one important in the History—A Conversation with Madame de Balzac, highly satisfactory and cheering—A Rencontre with a curious old Soldier—The extinction of a once great Luminary.

I HAD now been several weeks at Paris ; I had neither eagerly sought nor sedulously avoided its gaieties. It is not that one violent sorrow leaves us without power of enjoyment—it only lessens the power, and deadens the enjoyment ; it does not take away from us the objects of life—it only forestalls the more indifferent calmness of age. The blood no longer flows in an irregular, but delicious course of vivid and wild emotion ; the step no

longer spurns the earth; nor does the ambition wander, insatiable, yet undefined, over the million paths of existence; but we lose not our old capacities—they are quieted, not extinct. The heart can never utterly and long be dormant; trifles may not charm it any more, nor levities delight; but it has an eye that is not closed, and a pulse that has not yet ceased to beat. We survey the scene that moves around, with a gaze no longer distracted by every hope that flutters by; and it is therefore that we find ourselves more calculated than before for the graver occupations of our race. The overflowing temperament is checked to its proper level, the ambition bounded to its prudent and lawful goal. The earth is no longer so green, nor the heaven so blue, nor the fancy that stirs within us so rich in its creations; but we look more narrowly on the living crowd, and more rationally on the aims of men. The misfortune which has changed us, has only adapted us the better to a climate in which misfortune is a portion of the air. The grief that has thrallled

our spirit to a more narrow and dark cell, has also been a chain that has linked us to mankind with a force of which we dreamt not in the day of a wilder freedom and more luxuriant aspirings. In later life, a new spirit, partaking of that which was our earliest, returns to us. The solitude which delighted us in youth, but which, when the thoughts that make solitude a fairy land are darkened by affliction, becomes a fearful and sombre void, resumes its old spell as the more morbid and urgent memory of that affliction crumbles away by time. Content is a hermit ; but so also is apathy. Youth loves the solitary couch, which it surrounds with dreams. Age, or experience (which is the mind's age) loves the same couch for the rest which it affords ; but the wide interval between is that of exertion, of labour, and of labour among men. The woe which makes our *hearts* less social, often makes our *habits* more so. The thoughts, which in calm would have shunned the world, are *driven* upon it by the tempest, even as the birds which forsake the habitable land can, so long as the wind

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sleeps, and the thunder rests within its cloud, become the constant and solitary brooders over the waste sea ; but the moment the storm awakes, and the blast pursues them, they fly, by an overpowering instinct, to some wandering bark, some vestige of human and social life : and exchange, even for danger from the hands of men, the desert of an angry Heaven, and the solitude of a storm.

I heard no more, either of Madame de Maintenon or the king. Meanwhile, my flight and friendship with Lord Bolingbroke, had given me a consequence in the eyes of the exiled prince, which I should not otherwise have enjoyed ; and I was honoured by very flattering overtures to enter actively into his service. I have before said that I felt no enthusiasm in his cause, and I was far from feeling it for his person. My ambition rather directed its hopes towards a career in the service of France. France was the country of my birth, and the country of my father's fame. There no withering remembrances awaited me—no private regrets were associated with its scenes—and no public penalties

with its political institutions. And although I had not yet received any token of Louis's remembrance, it was still early, in the ordinary routine of court favours, to expect it; besides, his royal fidelity to his word was proverbial; and, sooner or later, I indulged the hope to profit by the sort of promise he had insinuated to me. I declined therefore, with all due respect, the offers of the Chevalier, and continued to live the life of idleness and expectation, until Lord Bolingbroke returned to Paris, and accepted the office of secretary of state in the service of the Chevalier. As he has publicly declared his reasons in this step, I do not mean to favour the world with his private conversations on the same subject.

A day or two after his return, I went with him to a party given by a member of the royal family. The first person by whom we were accosted—and I rejoiced at it, for we could not have been accosted by a more amusing one—was Count Anthony Hamilton.

“Ah! my Lord Bolingbroke,” said he, sauntering up to us; “how are you?—delighted to see

you again—what a charming green is your coat—certainly no one dresses in better taste than you do—not even our friend, my brother Count here. Do look at Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans! Saw you ever such a creature? Where are you moving, my Lord? Ah! see him, Count, see him, gliding off to that pretty duchesse of course—well, he has a beautiful bow, it must be owned—why, you are not going too?—what would the world say if Count Anthony Hamilton were seen left to himself? No, no, come and sit down by Madame de Cornuel—she longs to be introduced to you, and is one of the wittiest women in Europe.”

“*Volontiers!* provided she employs her wit ill-naturedly, and uses it in ridiculing other people, not praising herself.”

“Oh! nobody can be more satirical; indeed, what difference is there between wit and satire? Come, Count!”

And Hamilton introduced me forthwith to Madame de Cornuel. She received me very politely; and turning to two or three people who formed the

circle round her, said, with the greatest composure, “Messieurs, oblige me by seeking some other object of attraction ; I wish to have a private conference with my new friend.”

“I may stay,” said Hamilton.

“Ah ! certainly ; you are never in the way.”

“In that respect, *Madame*,” said Hamilton, taking snuff, and bowing very low—“in that respect I must strongly remind you of your excellent husband.”

“Fie !” cried Madame de Cornuel ; then, turning to me, she said, “Ah ! Monsieur, if you *could* have come to Paris some years ago you would have been enchanted with us—we are sadly changed. Imagine the fine old king, thinking it wicked not to hear plays, but to hear *players* act them, and so making the royal family a company of comedians. *Mon Dieu !* how villainously they perform ; but do you know why I wished to be introduced to you ?”

“Yes ! in order to have a new listener ; old listeners must be almost as tedious as old news.”

“ Very shrewdly said, and not far from the truth. The fact *is*, that I wanted to talk about all these fine people present, to some one for whose ear my anecdotes would have the charm of novelty. Let us begin with Louis Armond, Prince of Conti—you see him.”

“ What, that short-sighted, stout, and rather handsome man, with a cast of countenance somewhat like the pictures of *Henri Quatre*, who is laughing so merrily ?”

“ *O Ciel!* how droll ! No, that handsome man is no less a person than the *Duc D’Orleans*. You see a little ugly thing, like an anatomized ape—there see—he has just thrown down a chair, and, in stooping to pick it up, has almost fallen over the Dutch Ambassadress—that is Louis Armond, Prince of Conti. Do you know what the *Duc D’Orleans* said to him the other day ? ‘ *Mon bon ami,*’ he said, pointing to the prince’s limbs,—(did you ever see such limbs out of a menagerie, by the by ?)—‘ *Mon bon ami,* it is a fine thing for you that the Psalmist has assured us ‘ that the Lord de-

lighteth not in any man's legs.' Nay, don't laugh, it's quite true !”

It was now for Count Hamilton to take up the ball of satire ; he was not a whit more merciful than the kind Madame de Cornuel. “ ‘The Prince,’” said he, “ has so exquisite an awkwardness, that, whenever the king hears a noise, and inquires the cause, the invariable answer is, that ‘ the Prince of Conti has just tumbled down.’ But, tell me, what do you think of Madame d'Aumont ? She is in the English head-dress, and looks *triste à la mort*.”

“ She is rather pretty, to my taste.”

“ Yes,” cried Madame de Cornuel, interrupting *le doux* Antoine—(it did one's heart good to see how strenuously each of them tried to talk more scandal than the other)—“ yes, she is thought very pretty ; but I think her very like a *fricandeau*—white, soft, and insipid. She is always in tears,” (added the good-natured Cornuel) “ after her prayers, both at morning and evening. I asked why ; and she answered, pretty simpleton, that she was always forced to pray to be made good, and she feared

Heaven would take her at her word ! However, she has many worshippers ; and they call her the evening star."

" They should rather call her the Hyades !" said Hamilton, " if it be true that she sheds tears every morning and night, *and her rising and setting are thus always attended by rain.*"

" Bravo, Count Antoine ! she shall be so called in future," said Madame de Cornuel. " But now, Monsieur Devereux, turn your eyes to that hideous old woman."

" What ! the Duchesse d'Orleans ?"

" The same. She is in full dress to-night ; but in the day-time you generally see her in a riding-habit and a man's wig ; she is—"

" Hist !" interrupted Hamilton ; " do you not tremble to think what she would do if she overheard you ; she is such a terrible creature at fighting ! You have no conception, Count, what an arm she has. She knows her ugliness, and laughs at it, as all the rest of the world does. The king took her hand one day, and said, smiling, ' What could

Nature have meant when she gave this hand to a German princess instead of a Dutch peasant?" 'Sire,' said the Duchesse, very gravely, 'Nature gave this hand to a German princess for the purpose of boxing the ears of her *dames d'atour*!'

"Ha! ha! ha!" said Madame de Cornuel, laughing; "one is never at a loss for jokes upon a woman who eats *salad au lard*, and declares, that, whenever she is unhappy, her only consolation is ham and sausages! Her son treats her with the greatest respect, and consults her in all his amours, for which she professes the greatest horror, and which she retails to her correspondents all over the world, in letters as long as her pedigree. But you are looking at her son; is he not of a good mien?"

"Yes, pretty well; but does not exhibit to advantage by the side of Lord Bolingbroke, with whom he is now talking. Pray, who is the third personage that has just joined them?"

"Oh the wretch! it is the Abbé Dubois; a living proof of the folly of the French proverb, which says that Mercuries should be made *du marbre*, and

not *du bois*. Never was there a Mercury equal to the Abbé—but, do look at that old man to the left—he is one of the most remarkable persons of the age.”

“What ! he with the small features, and comely countenance considering his years ?”

“The same,” said Hamilton ; “it is the notorious Choisi. You know that he is the modern Tiresias, and has been a woman as well as man.”

“How do you mean ?”

“Ah, you may well ask !” cried Madame De Cornuel. “Why he lived for many years in the disguise of a woman, and had all sorts of curious adventures.”

“*Mort Diable !*” cried Hamilton ; “it was entering your ranks, Madame, as a spy. I hear he makes but a sorry report of what he saw there.”

“Come, Count Antoine,” cried the lively De Cornuel, “we must not turn our weapons against each other ; and when you attack a woman’s sex, you attack her individually. But what makes you look so intently, *mon petit* Devereux, at that ugly priest ?”

The person thus flatteringly designated, was Montreuil; he had just caught my eye, among a group of men who were conversing eagerly.

“Hush, Madame!” said I, “spare me for a moment;” and I rose, and mingled with the Abbé’s companions. “So, you have only arrived to-day,” I heard one of them say to him.

“No, I could not despatch my business before.”

“And how are matters in England?”

“Ripe!—if the life of his majesty (of France) be spared a year longer, we will send the Elector of Hanover back to his principality.”

“Hist!” said the companion, and looked towards me. Montreuil ceased abruptly—our eyes met—his fell. I affected to look among the group as if I had expected to find there some one I knew, and then, turning away, I seated myself alone and apart. There, unobserved, I kept my looks on Montreuil. I remarked that, from time to time, his keen dark eye glanced toward me, with a look rather of expressive vigilance than any

thing else. Soon afterwards his little knot dispersed; I saw him converse for a few moments with Dubois, who received him, I thought, distantly; and then he was engaged in a long conference with the Bishop of Fréjus, whom till then I had not perceived among the crowd.

As I was loitering on the *escalier*, where I saw Montreuil depart with the bishop, in the carriage of the latter, Hamilton, accosting me, insisted on my accompanying him to Chaulieu's, where a late supper awaited the sons of wine and wit. However, to the good count's great astonishment, I preferred solitude and reflection, for that night, to any thing else.

Montreuil's visit to the French capital boded me no good. He possessed great influence with Fleuri, and was in high esteem with Madame de Maintenon, and, in effect, very shortly after his return to Paris, the Bishop of Fréjus looked upon me with a most cool sort of benignancy; and Madame de Maintenon told her friend, the Duchesse de St. Simon, that it was a great pity a young nobleman,

of my birth and prepossessing appearance—(ay ! my prepossessing appearance would never have occurred to the devotee, if I had not seemed so sensible of her own)—should not only be addicted to the wildest dissipation, but, worse still, to Jansenistical tenets. After this, there was no hope for me, save in the king's word, which his increasing infirmities, naturally engrossing his attention, prevented my hoping too sanguinely, would dwell very acutely on his remembrance. I believe, however, so religiously scrupulous was Louis upon a point of honour, that, had he lived, I should have had nothing to complain of. As it was—but I anticipate !—Montreuil disappeared from Paris, almost as suddenly as he had appeared there. And as drowning men catch at a straw, so, finding my affairs in a very low ebb, I thought I would take advice, even from Madame de Balzac

I accordingly repaired to her hotel. She was at home, and, fortunately, alone.

“ You are welcome, *mon fils*,” said she: “ suffer

me to give you that title—you are welcome—it is some days since I saw you.”

“ I have numbered them, I assure you, Madame,” said I, “ and they have crept with a dull pace ; but you know that business has claims as well as pleasure !”

“ True !” said Madame de Balzac, pompously ; “ I myself find the weight of politics a little insupportable, though so used to it ; to your young brain I can readily imagine how irksome it must be !”

“ Would, Madame, that I could obtain your experience by contagion ; as it is, I fear that I have profited little by my visit to his Majesty. Madame de Maintenon will not see me, and the Bishop of Fréjus, (excellent man !) has been seized with a sudden paralysis of memory, whenever I present myself in his way.”

“ That party will never do—I thought not,” said Madame de Balzac, who was a wonderful imitator of the fly on the wheel ; “ *my* celebrity, and the knowledge that *I* loved you for your father’s

sake, were, I fear, sufficient to destroy your interest with the Jesuits and their tools. Well, well, we must repair the mischief we have occasioned you. What place would suit you best?"

"Why, any thing diplomatic. I would rather travel at my age, than remain in luxury and indolence even at Paris!"

"Ah, nothing like diplomacy!" said Madame de Balzac, with the air of a Richelieu, and emptying her snuff-box at a pinch; "but have you, my son, the requisite qualities for that science, as well as the tastes? Are you capable of intrigue? Can you say one thing and mean another? Are you aware of the immense consequence of a look or a bow? Can you live like a spider, in the centre of an inexplicable net—inexplicable as well as dangerous—to all but the weaver? That, my son, is the art of politics—that is to be a diplomatist?"

"Perhaps, to one less penetrating than Madame de Balzac," answered I, "I might, upon trial, not appear utterly ignorant of the noble art of state duplicity which she has so eloquently depicted."

“Possibly!” said the good lady; “it must indeed be a profound dissimulator to deceive *me*.”

“But what would you advise me to do in the present crisis? What party to adopt—what individual to flatter?”

Nothing, I already discovered, and have already observed, did the inestimable Madame de Balzac dislike more than a downright question—she never answered it.

“Why, really,” said she, preparing herself for a long speech, “I am quite glad you consult me, and I will give you the best advice in my power. *Ecoutez, donc*—you have seen the Duc de Maine?”

“Certainly!”

“Hum! ha! it would be wise to follow him; but—you takeme—you understand.—Then, you know, my son, there is the Duc d’Orleans—fond of pleasure—full of talent—but you know—there is a little—what do you call it—you understand. As for the Duc de Bourbon—’tis quite a simpleton—nevertheless we must consider—nothing like consideration—believe me, no diplomatist ever hurries. As for

Madame de Maintenon—you know, and I know too, that the Duchesse d'Orleans calls her an old hag—but then—a word to the wise—Eh!—what shall we say to Madame the Duchesse herself—what a fat woman she is—but excessively clever—such a letter writer.—Well—you see, my dear young friend, that it is a very difficult matter to decide upon—but you must already be fully aware what plan I should advise.”

“ Already, Madame !”

“ To be sure ! What have I been saying to you all this time ?—did you not hear me ?—Shall I repeat my advice ?”

“ Oh, no ! I perfectly comprehend you now ; you would advise me—in short—to—to—do as well as I can.”

“ You have said it, my son. I thought you would understand me, on a little reflection.”

“ To be sure—to be sure,” said I.

And three ladies being announced, my conference with Madame de Balzac ended.

I now resolved to wait a little till the tides of

power seemed somewhat more settled, and I could ascertain in what quarter to point my bark of enterprise. I gave myself rather more eagerly to society, in proportion as my political schemes were suffered to remain torpid. My mind could not remain quiet without preying on itself; and no evil appeared to me so great as tranquillity. Thus the spring and earlier summer passed on, till, in August, the riots preceding the rebellion broke out in Scotland. At this time I saw but little of Lord Bolingbroke in private; though, with his characteristic affectation, he took care that the load of business, with which he was really oppressed, should not prevent his enjoyment of all gaieties in public. And my indifference to the cause of the Chevalier, in which he was so warmly engaged, threw a natural restraint upon our conversation, and produced an involuntary coldness in our intercourse—so impossible is it for men to be private friends who differ on a public matter.

One evening I was engaged to meet a large party, at a country house about forty miles from Paris.

I went, and stayed some days. My horses had accompanied me ; and, when I left the château, I resolved to make the journey to Paris *à cheval*. Accordingly, I ordered my carriage to follow me, and, attended by a single groom, commenced my expedition. It was a beautiful still morning—the first day of the first month of autumn. I had proceeded about ten miles, when I fell in with an old French officer. I remember—though I never saw him but that once—I remember his face as if I had encountered it yesterday. It was thin and long, and yellow enough to have served as a caricature, rather than a portrait, of Don Quixote. He had a hook nose, and a long sharp chin ; and all the lines, wrinkles, curves and furrows, of which the human visage is capable, seemed to have met in his cheeks. Nevertheless, his eye was bright and keen—his look alert—and his whole bearing firm, gallant, and soldier-like. He was attired in a sort of military undress—wore a mustachio, which, though thin and grey, was carefully curled ; and, at the summit of a very respectable wig was perched a

small cocked hat, adorned with a black feather. He rode very upright in his saddle ; and his horse, a steady, stalwart quadruped, of the Norman breed, with a terribly long tail, and a prodigious breadth of chest, put one stately leg before another in a kind of trot, which, though it seemed, from its height of action, and the proud look of the steed, a pretension to motion more than ordinarily brisk, was, *à la vérité*, a little slower than a common walk.

This noble cavalier seemed sufficiently an object of curiosity to my horse, to induce the animal to testify his surprise by shying, very jealously and very vehemently, in passing him. This ill-breeding on his part was indignantly returned on the part of the Norman charger, who, uttering a sort of squeak, and shaking his long mane and head, commenced a series of curvets and capers, which cost the old Frenchman no little trouble to appease. In the midst of these equine freaks, the horse came so near me as to splash my nether garment, with a liberality as little ornamental as it was pleasurable.

The old Frenchman seeing this, took off his cocked hat very politely, and apologized for the accident. I replied with equal courtesy ; and, as our horses slid into quiet, their riders slid into conversation. It was begun and chiefly sustained by my new comrade ; for I am little addicted to commence unnecessary socialities myself, though I should think very meanly of my pretensions to the name of a gentleman and a courtier if I did not return them when offered, even by a beggar.

“ It is a fine horse of yours, Monsieur,” said the old Frenchman ; “ but I cannot believe—pardon me for saying so—that your slight English steeds are so well adapted to the purposes of war as our strong chargers—*voici le mien, par exemple.*”

“ It is very possible, Monsieur,” said I. “ Has the horse you now ride done service in the field as well as on the road ?”

“ Ah ! *le pauvre petit mignon*—no !”—(*petit*, indeed—this little darling was seventeen hands high at the very least)—“ no, Monsieur ; it is but a

young creature this — his grandfather served me well !”

“ I need not ask you, Monsieur, if you have borne arms—the soldier is stamped upon you !”

“ Sir, you flatter me highly !” said the old gentleman, blushing to the very tip of his long lean ears, and bowing as low as if I had called him a *Condé* ; “ I have followed the profession of arms for more than fifty years.”

“ Fifty years—’tis a long time !”

“ A long time,” rejoined my companion, bowing again to my profound truism — “ a long time to look back upon with regret.”

“ Regret ! by Heaven—I should think the remembrance of fifty years’ excitement and glory would be a remembrance of triumph.”

The old man turned round on his saddle, and looked at me for some moments very wistfully—
“ You are young, Sir,” he said ; and at your years I should have thought with you—but—” (then abruptly changing his voice, he continued)—“ Tri-

umph, did you say? Sir, I have had three sons; they are dead—they died in battle—I did not weep—I did not shed a tear, Sir—not a tear! But I will tell you when I did weep. I came back an old man to the home I had left as a young one. I saw the country a desert. I saw that the noblesse had become tyrants—the peasants had become slaves—such slaves — savage from despair—even when they were most gay, most fearfully gay, from constitution. Sir, I saw the priest rack and grind, and the seigneur exact and pillage, and the tax-gatherer squeeze out the little the other oppressors had left:—anger, discontent, wretchedness, famine, a terrible separation between one order of people and another—an incredible indifference to the miseries their despotism caused, on the part of the aristocracy—a sullen and vindictive hatred for the perpetration of those miseries on the part of the people—all places sold—even all honours priced at the court, which was become a public market—a province of peasants—of living men bartered for a few livres, and literally passed from

one hand to another—to be squeezed and drained anew by each new possessor—in a word, Sir, an abandoned court, an unredeemed noblesse—unredeemed, Sir, by a single benefit which, in other countries, even the most feudal, the vassal obtains from the master—a peasantry famished—a nation loaded with debt, which it sought to pay by tears;—these are what I saw—these are the consequences of that heartless and miserable vanity, from which arose wars neither useful nor honourable—these are the real components of that *triumph*, as you term it, which you wonder that I regret.”

Now, although it was impossible to live at the court of Louis XIV. in his latter days, and not feel, from the general discontent that prevailed even *there*, what a dark truth the old soldier’s speech contained—yet I was somewhat surprised by an enthusiasm so little military in a person whose bearing and air were so conspicuously martial.

“ You draw a melancholy picture,” said I; “ and the wretched state of culture in which the lands that we now pass through exhibit, is a witness

how little exaggeration there is in your colouring. However, these are but the ordinary evils of war, and if your country endures them, do not forget that she has also inflicted them. Remember what France did to Holland, and own that it is but a retribution that France should now find, that the injury we do to others is (among nations as well as individuals) injury to ourselves.

My old Frenchman curled his moustaches with the finger and thumb of his left hand: this was rather too subtle a distinction for him.

“That may be true enough, Monsieur,” said he; “but, *morbleu*, those *maudits* Dutchmen deserved what they sustained at our hands. No, Sir, no—I am not so base as to forget the glory my country acquired, though I weep for her wounds.”

“I do not quite understand you, Sir,” said I; “did you not just now confess that the wars you had witnessed were neither honourable nor useful? What glory, then, was to be acquired in a war of that character, even though it was so delightfully

animated by cutting the throats of ‘ those *maudits* Dutchmen ?’ ”

“ Sir,” answered the Frenchman, drawing himself up, “ you did *not* understand me. When we punished Holland, we did rightly. *We conquered !*”

“ Whether you conquered, or not (for the good folk of Holland are not so sure of the fact),” answered I, “ that war was the most unjust in which your king was ever engaged ; but pray tell me, Sir, what war it is that you lament ?”

The Frenchman frowned—whistled—put out his under lip, in a sort of angry embarrassment—and then, spurring his great horse into a curvet, said,

“ That last war with the English !”

“ Faith,” said I, “ that was the justest of all.”

“ Just !” cried the Frenchman, halting abruptly, and darting at me a glance of fire, “ just !—no more, Sir ! no more ! I was at Blenheim, and at Ramilies !”

As the old warrior said the last words, his voice

faltered ; and though I could not help inly smiling at the confusion of ideas, by which wars were just or unjust, according as they were fortunate or not, yet I respected his feelings enough to turn away my face, and remain silent.

“ Yes,” renewed my comrade, colouring with evident shame, and drawing his cocked hat over his brows, “ yes, I received my last wound at Ramilies. *Then* my eyes were opened to the horrors of war ; *then* I saw and cursed the evils of ambition ; *then* I resolved to retire from the armies of a king who had lost for ever his name, his glory, and his country.”

Was there ever a better type of the French nation than this old soldier ? As long as fortune smiles on them, it is “ *Marchons au diable !*” and “ *Vive la gloire !*” Directly they get beat, it is “ *Ma pauvre patrie !*” and “ *Les calamities affreuses de la guerre !*”

“ However,” said I, “ the old king is drawing near the end of his days, and is said to express his

repentance at the evils his ambition has occasioned."

The old soldier shoved back his hat, and offered me his snuff-box. I judged by this that he was a little mollified.

"Ah!" he renewed, after a pause, "Ah! times are sadly changed, since the year 1667; when the young king—he was young then—took the field, in Flanders, under the great Turenne. *Sacristie!* What a hero he looked, upon his white war-horse! I would have gone—aye, and the meanest and backwardest soldier in the camp would have gone—into the very mouth of the cannon, for a look from that magnificent countenance, or a word from that mouth which knew so well what words were! Sir, there was in the war of seventy-two, when we were at peace with Great Britain, an English gentleman, then in the army, afterwards a marshal of France: I remember, as if it were yesterday, how gallantly he behaved. The king sent to compliment him, after some signal proof of courage and conduct,

and asked what reward he would have. ‘Sire,’ answered the Englishman, ‘give me the white plume you wore this day.’ From that moment the Englishman’s fortune was made.”

“The flattery went farther than the valour,” said I, smiling, as I recognized in the anecdote the first great step which my father had made in the ascent of fortune.

“*Sacristie !*” cried the Frenchman, “it was no flattery, then. We so idolized the king, that mere truth would have seemed disloyalty ; and we no more thought that praise, however extravagant, was adulation, when directed to him, than we should have thought there was adulation in the praise we would have given to our first mistress. But it is all changed now ! Who now cares for the old priest-ridden monarch?”

And upon this the veteran, having conquered the momentary enthusiasm which the remembrance of the king’s earlier glories had excited, transferred all his genius of description to the opposite side of the question, and declaimed, with great energy,

upon the royal vices and errors, which were so charming in prosperity, and were now so detestable in adversity.

While we were thus conversing, we approached Versailles. We thought the vicinity of the town seemed unusually deserted. We entered the main street—crowds were assembled—an universal murmur was heard—excitement sat on every countenance. Here an old crone was endeavouring to explain something, evidently beyond his comprehension, to a child of three years old; who, with open mouth and fixed eyes, seemed to make up in wonder for the want of intelligence; there, a group of old disbanded soldiers occupied the way, and seemed, from their muttered conversations, to vent a sneer and a jest at a priest, who, with downward countenance and melancholy air, was hurrying along.

One young fellow was calling out—"At least, it is a holyday, and I shall go to Paris!"—and, as a contrast to him, an old withered artizan, leaning on a gold-headed cane, with sharp avarice

eloquent in every line of his face, muttered out to a fellow miser—"No business to-day—no money, John—no money!" One knot of women, of all ages, close by which my horse passed, was entirely occupied with a single topic, and that so vehemently, that I heard the leading words of the discussion. "Mourning—becoming—what fashion?—how long?—O ciel!" Thus do follies weave themselves round the bier of death!

"What is the news, gentlemen?" said I.

"News—what, you have not heard it!—The king is dead!"

"Louis dead—Louis the Great, dead!" cried my companion.

"Louis the Great?" said a sullen-looking man—"Louis, the persecutor!"

"Ah—he's a Huguenot!" cried another, with haggard cheeks and hollow eyes, scowling at the last speaker. "Never mind what he says—the king was right when he refused protection to the Heretics—but was he right when he levied such taxes on the Catholics?"

“Hush !” said a third—“hush—it may be unsafe to speak—there are spies about ; for my part, I think it was all the fault of the Noblesse.”

“And the favourites !” cried a soldier, fiercely.

“And the harlots !” cried a hag of eighty.

“And the priests !” muttered the Huguenot.

“And the tax-gatherers !” added the lean Catholic.

We rode slowly on. My comrade was evidently and powerfully affected.

“So, he is dead !” said he. “Dead !—well—well—peace be with him. He conquered in Holland—he humbled Genoa—he dictated to Spain—he commanded Condé and Turenne—he—Bah ! What is all this ?” (then, turning abruptly to me, my companion cried)—

“I did not speak against the king, did I, Sir ?”

“Not much.”

“I am glad of that—yes, very glad !” And the old man glared fiercely round on a troop of boys, who were audibly abusing the dead lion.

“I would have bit out my tongue, rather than it had joined in the base joy of these yelping curs. Heavens ! when I think what shouts I have heard—when the name of that man, then deemed little less than a God, was but breathed !—and now—why do you look at me, Sir ? My eyes are moist—I know it, Sir—I know it. The old battered, broken soldier, who made his first campaigns, when that which is now dust was the idol of France, and the pupil of Turenne—the old soldier’s eyes shall not be dry, though there is not another tear shed in the whole of this great empire.”

“Your three sons ?” said I ; “you did not weep for them ?”

“No, Sir—I loved them when I was old ; but I loved Louis *when I was young* !”

“Your oppressed and pillaged country ?” said I—“think of that.”

“No, Sir, I will not think of it !” cried the old warrior, in a passion. “I will not think of it—to-day, at least.”

“You are right, my brave friend ; in the grave let us bury even public wrongs—but let us not bury their remembrance. May the joy we read in every face that we pass—joy at the death of one whom idolatry once almost seemed to deem immortal—be a lesson to future kings !”

My comrade did not immediately answer ; but, after a pause, and we had turned our backs upon the town, he said—

“Joy, Sir—you spoke of joy ! Yes, we are Frenchmen—we forgive our rulers easily for private vices and petty faults ; but we never forgive them, if they commit the greatest of faults, and suffer a stain to rest upon—”

“What ?” I asked, as my comrade broke off.

“The national glory, Monsieur !” said he.

“You have hit it,” said I, smiling at the turgid sentiment which was so really and deeply felt. “And had you written folios upon the character of your countrymen, you could not have expressed it better.”

CHAPTER VIII.

In which there is reason to fear that Princes are not invariably free from Human Peccadilloes.

ON entering Paris, my veteran fellow-traveller took leave of me, and I proceeded to my hotel. When the first excitation of my thoughts was a little subsided, and after some feelings of a more public nature, I began to consider what influence the king's death was likely to have on my own fortunes, I could not but see, at a glance, that for the cause of the Chevalier, and the destiny of his present exertions in Scotland, it was the most fatal event that could have occurred.

The balance of power, in the contending factions of France, would, I foresaw, lie entirely between the Duke of Orleans and the legitimate children of the late king; the latter, closely leagued as they were with Madame de Maintenon, would not be much disposed to consider the welfare of the *bon* Comte Devereux, and my wishes, therefore, naturally settled on the former. I was not doomed to a long suspense. Every one knows, that the very next day the Duke of Orleans appeared before Parliament, and was proclaimed regent—that the will of the late king was set aside—and that the Duke of Maine became *tout-à-coup* as low in power as he had always been despicable in intellect. A little hubbub ensued—people in general laughed at the regent's finesse—and the more sagacious admired the courage and address of which the finesse was composed. The Regent's mother wrote a letter of sixty-nine pages about it; and the Duchess of Maine boxed the duke's ears very heartily for not being as clever as herself. All Paris teemed with

joyous forebodings ; and the Regent, whom every one, some time ago, had suspected of poisoning his cousins, every one now declared to be the most perfect prince that could possibly be imagined, and the very picture of *Henri Quatre*, in goodness as well as physiognomy. Three days after this event, one happened to myself, with which my public career may be said to commence.

I had spent the evening at a house in a distant part of Paris, and, invited by the beauty of the night, had dismissed my carriage, and was walking home alone and on foot. Occupied with my reflections, and not very well acquainted with the dangerous and dark streets of Paris, in which it was very rare for those who have carriages to wander on foot, I insensibly strayed from my appropriate direction. When I first discovered this disagreeable fact, I was in a filthy and obscure lane rather than street, which I did not remember having ever honoured with my presence before. While I was pausing in the vain hope and anxious

endeavour to shape out some imaginary chart—some “map of the mind,” by which to direct my bewildered course, I heard a confused noise proceed from another lane at right angles with the one in which I then was. I listened—the sound became more distinct—I recognised human voices in loud and angry altercation—a moment more, and there was a scream. Though I did not attach much importance to the circumstance, I thought I might as well approach nearer to the quarter of noise. I walked to the door of the house from which the scream proceeded; it was very small, and mean. Just as I neared it a window was thrown open, and a voice cried—
“ Help ! help ! for God’s sake, help ! ”

“ What’s the matter ? ” I asked.

“ Whoever you are, save us ! ” cried the voice, “ and that instantly, or we shall be murdered : ” and, the moment after, the voice ceased abruptly, and was succeeded by the clashing of swords.

I beat loudly at the door—I shouted out—no answer; the scuffle within seemed to increase;

I saw a small blind alley to the left; one of the unfortunate women, to whom such places are homes, was standing in it. "What possibility is there of entering the house?" I asked.

"Oh!" said she, "it does not matter; it is not the first time gentlemen have cut each other's throats *there*."

"What! is it a house of bad repute?"

"Yes; and where there are bullies who wear knives, and take purses—as well as ladies, who—"

"Good Heavens!" cried I, interrupting her, "there is no time to be lost. Is there no other way of entrance but at this door?"

"Yes, if you are bold enough to enter at another!"

"Where?"

"Down this alley."

Immediately I entered the alley—the woman pointed to a small, dark, narrow flight of stairs—I ascended—the sounds increased in loudness. I mounted to the second flight—a light streamed from a door—the clashing of swords was dis-

tinctly audible within—I broke open the door, and saw myself a witness and intruder in a scene at once ludicrous and fearful.

A table, covered with bottles and the remnants of a meal, was in the centre of the room; several articles of women's dress were scattered over the floor; two women of unequivocal description were clinging to a man richly dressed, and who having fortunately got behind an immense chair, that had been overthrown, probably, in the scuffle, managed to keep off, with awkward address, a fierce-looking fellow, who had less scope for the ability of his sword arm, from the circumstance of his attempting to pull away the chair with his left hand. Whenever he stooped to effect this object, his antagonist thrust at him very vigorously, and had it not been for the embarrassment his female enemies occasioned him, the latter would, in all probability, have dispatched or disabled his besieger. This fortified gentleman being backed by the window, was, I immediately concluded, the person who had called to me for assistance

At the other corner of the apartment was another cavalier, who used his sword with singular skill, but who, being hard pressed by two lusty fellows, was forced to employ that skill rather in defence than attack. Altogether, the disordered appearance of the room, the broken bottles, the fumes with which the hot atmosphere teemed, the evident profligacy of the two women, the half *derobé* guise of the cavaliers, and the ruffian air, and collected ferocity of the assailants, plainly denoted that it was one of those perilous festivals of pleasure in which imprudent gallants were often, in that day, betrayed by treacherous Dailahs into the hands of Philistines, who, not contented with stripping them for the sake of plunder, frequently murdered them for the sake of secrecy.

Having taken a rapid, but satisfactory, survey of the scene, I did not think it necessary to make any preparatory parley. I threw myself upon the nearest bravo with so hearty a goodwill, that I ran him through the body before he had recovered

his surprise at my appearance. This somewhat startled the other two; they drew back, and demanded quarter.

“Quarter, indeed!” cried the farther cavalier, releasing himself from his astonished female assailants, and leaping nimbly over his bulwark, into the centre of the room—“quarter, indeed, rascally *ivrognes*! No; it is our turn now; and, by Joseph of Arimathea! you shall sup with Pilate to-night.” So saying, he pressed his old assailant so fiercely, that, after a short contest, the latter retreated till he had backed himself to the door, he then suddenly turned round, and vanished in a twinkling. The third and remaining ruffian was far from thinking himself a match for three men; he fell on his knees, and implored mercy. However, the *ci-devant* sustainer of the besieged chair was but little disposed to afford him the clemency he demanded, and approached the crest-fallen bravo with so grim an air of truculent delight, brandishing his sword, and uttering the most terrible threats, that there would have been

small doubt of the final catastrophe of the trembling bully, had not the other gallant thrown himself in the way of his friend.

“Put up thy sword,” said he, laughing, and yet with an air of command; “we must not court crime, and then punish it.” Then, turning to the bully, he said, “Rise, Sir Rascal! the devil spares thee a little longer, and this gentleman will not disobey *his*, as well as *thy* master’s wishes.—Begone!”

The fellow wanted no second invitation: he sprang to his legs, and to the door. The disappointed cavalier assisted his descent down the stairs with a kick, that would have done the work of the sword to any flesh not accustomed to such pedal applications. Putting up his rapier, the milder gentleman then turned to *the ladies*, who lay huddled together under shelter of the chair which their intended victim had deserted.

“Ah, Mesdames,” said he, gravely, and with a low bow, “I am sorry for your disappointment. As long as you contented yourselves with robbery,

it were a shame to have interfered with your innocent amusements; but cold steel becomes serious. Monsieur D'Argenson will favour you with some inquiries to-morrow; at present, I recommend you to empty what remains in the bottle. Adieu! Monsieur, to whom I am so greatly indebted, honour me with your arm down these stairs. You" (turning to his friend) "will follow us, and keep a sharp look behind. *Allons! Vive Henri Quatre!*"

As we descended the dark and rough stairs, my new companion said, "What an excellent antidote to the effects of the vin de champagne is this same fighting. I feel as if I had not tasted a drop these six hours. What fortune brought you hither, Monsieur?" addressing me.

We were now at the foot of the first flight of stairs, a high and small window admitted the moonlight, and we saw each other's faces clearly.

"That fortune," answered I, looking at my acquaintance steadily, but with an expression of profound respect—"that fortune which watches

over kingdoms, and which, I trust, may in no place or circumstance be a deserter from your Highness."

"Highness!" said my companion, colouring, and darting a glance, first at his friend and then at me. "Hist—Sir, you know me, then—speak low—you know, then, for whom you have drawn your sword?"

"Yes, so please your Highness. I have drawn it this night for Philip of Orleans; I trust yet, in another scene, and for another cause, to draw it for the Regent of France!"

CHAPTER IX.

A Prince—an Audience—and a Secret Embassy.

THE Regent remained silent for a moment : he then said, in an altered and grave voice, “ *C’est bien, Monsieur !* I thank you for the distinction you have made. It were not amiss,” (he added, turning to his comrade,) “ that *you* would now and then deign, henceforward, to make the same distinction. But this is neither time nor place for parlance. On, gentlemen !”

I re-offered my arm to the prince ; and I saw through his heart, when he, though with great courtesy, refused it. A man does not love you

the better for discovering even his greatness when he wishes to hide it. However, it was not the love of the profligate, but a hold upon the prince, which I desired, and for which I had played my game.

We left the house, passed into the street, and moved on rapidly, and in silence, till the constitutional gaiety of the duke, recovering its ordinary tone, he said, with a laugh—

“ Well, now, it is a little hard that a man who has been toiling all day for the public good, should feel ashamed of indulging for an hour or two at night in his private amusements ; but so it is. ‘ Once grave, always grave ! ’ is the maxim of the world—eh, Chatran ? ”

The companion bowed. “ ‘Tis a very good saying, please your royal highness, and is intended to warn us from the sin of *ever* being grave ! ”

“ Ha-ha ! you have *un grand talent pour la morale, mon bon Chatran !* ” cried the duke, “ and would draw a rule for conduct out of the wickedest *bon mot* of Dubois. Monsieur, pardon

me, but I have seen you before: you are the Count —”

“ Devereux, Monseigneur.”

“ True, true ! I have heard much of you : you are intimate with Milord Bolingbroke. Would that I had fifty friends like *him*.”

“ Monseigneur would have little trouble in his regency if his wish were realized,” said Chatran.

“ *Tant mieux*, so long as I had little odium as well as little trouble—a happiness which, thanks to you and Dubois, I am not likely to enjoy—. *Mais voilà la voiture !*”

And the duke pointed to a dark, plain carriage, which we had suddenly come upon.

“ Count Devereux,” said the merry regent, “ you will enter : my duty requires that, at this seductive hour, I should see a young gentleman of your dangerous age safely lodged at his hotel !”

We entered, Chatran gave the orders, and we drove off rapidly.

The Regent hummed a tune, and his two companions listened to it in respectful silence.

“ Well, well, Messieurs,” said he, bursting out at last into open voice, “ I will ever believe, in future, that the gods *do* look benignantly on us worshippers of the Alma Venus ! Do you know much of Tibullus, Monsieur Devereux ? And can you assist my memory with the continuation of the line—

“ ‘ Quisquis amore tenetur eat—’ ”

—————“ ‘ tutusque sacerque
Qualibet : insidias non timuisse decet.’ ”

answered I.

“ *Bon !*” cried the duke. “ I love a gentleman from my very soul, when he can both fight well and read Latin ! I hate a man who is merely a wine-bibber and blade drawer. By St. Louis, though it is an excellent thing to fill the stomach, especially with Tokay, yet there is no reason in the world why we should not fill the head too. But here we are. Adieu, Monsieur Devereux—we shall see you at the *palais*.”

I expressed my thanks briefly at the Regent’s

condescension, descended from the carriage, (which instantly drove off with renewed celerity,) and once more entered my hotel.

Two or three days after my adventure with the Regent, I thought it expedient to favour that eccentric prince with a visit. During the early part of his regency, it is well known how successfully he combated with his natural indolence, and how devotedly his mornings were surrendered to the toils of his new office; but when pleasure has grown habit, it requires a stronger mind than that of Philippe le Debonnair to give it a permanent successor in business. Pleasure is, indeed, like the genius of the fable, the most useful of slaves, while you subdue it: the most intolerable of tyrants the moment your negligence suffers it to subdue you.

The hours in which the prince gave audience to the comrades of his lighter, rather than graver, occupations, were those immediately before and after his levee. I thought that this would be the best season for me to present myself. Accordingly,

one morning after the levee, I repaired to his palace.

The anti-chamber was already crowded. I sat myself quietly down in one corner of the room, and looked upon the motley groups around. I smiled inly as they reminded me of the scenes my own anti-room, in my younger days of folly and fortune, was wont to exhibit; the same heterogeneous assemblage (only upon a grander scale) of the ministers to the physical appetites and the mental tastes. There was the fretting and impudent mountebank, side by side with the gentle and patient scholar—the harlot's envoy and the priest's messenger—the agent of the police, and the licensed breaker of its laws—there;—but what boots a more prolix description? What is the anti-room of a great man, who has many wants and many tastes, but a panorama of the blended disparities of this compounded world.

While I was moralizing, a gentleman suddenly thrust his head out of a door, and appeared to reconnoitre us. Instantly, the crowd swept up to

him. I thought I might as well follow the general example, and pushing aside some of my fellow loiterers, I presented myself and my name to the gentleman, with the most ingratiating air I could command.

The gentleman, who was tolerably civil for a great man's great man, promised that my visit should be immediately announced to the prince ; and then, with the politest bow imaginable, slapped the door in my face. After I had waited about seven or eight minutes longer, the gentleman re-appeared, singled me from the crowd, and desired me to follow him ; I passed through another room, and was presently in the Regent's presence.

I was rather startled when I saw by the morning light, and in déshabille, the person of that royal martyr to dissipation. His countenance was red, but bloated, and a weakness in his eyes added considerably to the jaded and haggard expression of his features. A proportion of stomach rather inclined to corpulency, seemed to betray the taste for *gourmanderie*, which the most radically coarse,

and yet (strange to say) the most generally accomplished and really good-natured of royal profligates, combined with his other qualifications. He was yawning very elaborately over a great heap of papers, when I entered. He finished his yawn, (as if it were too brief and too precious a recreation to lose,) and then said, “Good morning, Monsieur Devereux ; I am glad that you have found me out *at last*.”

“I was afraid, Monseigneur, of appearing an intruder on your presence, by offering my homage to you before.”

“So like my good fortune,” said the Regent, turning to a man seated at another table at some distance, whose wily, astute countenance, piercing eye, and licentious expression of lip and brow, indicated at once the ability and vice which composed his character. “So like my good fortune, is it not, Dubois ? If ever I meet with a tolerably pleasant fellow, who does not disgrace me by his birth or reputation, he is always so terribly afraid of intruding ! and whenever I pick up a respectable

personage without wit, or a wit without respectability, he attaches himself to me like a burr, and can't live a day without inquiring after my health."

Dubois smiled, bowed, but did not answer, and I saw that his look was bent darkly and keenly upon me.

"Well," said the prince, "what think you of our opera, Count Devereux?—It beats your English one—eh!"

"Ah, certainly, Monseigneur; ours is but a reflection of yours."

"So says your friend, milord Bolingbroke, a person who knows about operas almost as much as I do, which, vanity apart, is saying a great deal. I should like very well to visit England—what should I learn best there? In Spain (I shall always love Spain,) I learnt to cook."

"Monseigneur, I fear," answered I, smiling, "could obtain but little additional knowledge in that art in our barbarous country. A few rude and imperfect inventions, have, indeed, of late years astonished the feeble cultivators of the

science ; but *une nuit épaisse*, rests still upon its main principles and leading truths. Perhaps, what Monseigneur would find best worth studying in England would be—*les dames*.

“ Ah ! *les dames* all over the world !” cried the Duke, laughing ; “ but I hear your *belles Anglaises* are sentimental, and love à *l’Arcadienne*.”

“ It is true at present : but who shall say how far Monseigneur’s example might enlighten them in a train of thought so erroneous ?”

“ *C’est vrai*. Nothing like example, eh, Dubois ? What would Philip of Orleans have been but for thee ?”

“ ‘ *L’exemple souvent n’est qu’un miroir trompeur,
Quelquefois l’un se brise où l’autre s’est sauvé,
Et par où l’un périt, un autre est conservé,*’ ”

answered Dubois out of *Cinna*.

“ Corneille, is right,” rejoined the Regent. After all, to do thee justice, *mon petit Abbé*, example has little to do with corrupting us. Nature pleads the cause of Pleasure, as Hyperides pleaded that of Phryne. She has no need of eloquence : *she*

unveils the bosom of her client, and the client is acquitted."

"Monseigneur shews at least that he has learnt to profit by my humble instructions in the classics," said Dubois.

The Duke did not answer. I turned my eyes to some drawings on the table—I expressed my admiration of them. "They are mine," said the Regent. "Ah! I should have been much more accomplished as a private gentleman, than I fear I ever shall be as a public man of toil and business. Business—bah! But Necessity is the only real king in the world, the only enviable despot for whom there is no law. What! are you going already, Count Devereux?"

"Monseigneur's anti-room is crowded with less fortunate persons than myself, whose sins of envy and covetousness I am now answerable for."

"Ah—well! I must hear the poor devils; the only pleasure I have is in seeing how easily I can make them happy. Would to God, Dubois, that one could govern a great kingdom only by fair words!

Count Devereux, you have seen me to day as my acquaintance ; see me again as my petitioner. *Bon jour, Monsieur.*"

And I retired, very well pleased with my reception : from that time, indeed, during the rest of my short stay at Paris, the prince honoured me with his especial favour. But I have dwelt too long in my *séjour* at the French court. The persons whom I have described, and who alone made that *séjour* memorable, must be my apology.

One day I was honoured by a visit from the Abbé Dubois. After a short conversation upon indifferent things, he accosted me thus :

" You are aware, Count Devereux, of the partiality which the Regent has conceived towards you. Fortunate would it be for that Prince," (here Dubois elevated his brows with an ironical and arch expression,) " so good by disposition, so injured by example, if his partiality had been more frequently testified towards gentlemen of your merit. A mission of considerable importance, and one demanding great personal address,

gives his Royal Highness an opportunity of testifying his esteem for you. He honoured me with a conference on the subject yesterday, and has now commissioned me to explain to you the technical objects of this mission, and to offer to you the honour of conveying it. Should you accept the proposals, you will wait upon his highness before his levee to-morrow."

Dubois then proceeded in the clear rapid manner peculiar to him, to comment on the state of Europe. "For France," said he, in concluding his sketch, "peace is absolutely necessary. A drained treasury, an exhausted country, require it. You see from what I have said, that Spain and England are the principal quarters, from which we are to dread hostilities. Spain we must guard against—England we must propitiate; the latter object is easy in England in any case, whether James or George be uppermost. For whoever is king in England, will have quite enough to do at home, to make him agree willingly enough to peace abroad. The former requires

a less simple and a more enlarged policy. I fear the ambition of the Queen of Spain, and the turbulent genius of her minion Alberoni. We must fortify ourselves by new forms of alliance, at various courts, which shall at once defend *us* and intimidate our enemies. We wish to employ some nobleman of ability and address, on a secret mission to Russia—will you be that person? Your absence from Paris will be but short—you will see a very droll country, and a very droll sovereign; you will return hither, doubly the rage, and with a just claim to more important employment hereafter. What say you to the proposal?"

"I must hear more," said I, "before I decide."

The Abbé renewed. It is needless to repeat all the particulars of the commission that he enumerated. Suffice it that after a brief consideration, I accepted the honour proposed to me. The Abbé wished me joy, relapsed into his ordinary strain of coarse levity for a few minutes,

and then reminding me that I was to attend the Regent on the morrow, departed. It was easy to see, that in the mind of that subtle and crafty ecclesiastic, with whose manœuvres private intrigues were always blended with public, this offer of employment veiled a desire to banish me from the immediate vicinity of the good-natured Regent, whose favour the aspiring Abbé wished at that exact moment exclusively to monopolise. Mere men of pleasure, he knew would not interfere with his aims upon the prince ; mere men of business still less : but a man who was thought to combine the capacities of both, and who was moreover distinguished by the Regent, he deemed a more dangerous rival than the inestimable person thus suspected really was.

However, I cared little for the honest man's motives. Adventure to me had always greater charms than dissipation, and it was far more agreeable to the nature of my ambition, to win distinction by any honourable method, than by favouritism at a court, so hollow, so un-

principled, and so grossly licentious as that of the Regent. There, to be the most successful courtier, was to be the most amusing *débauché*. Alas, when the heart is away from its objects and the taste revolts at its excess, Pleasure is worse than palling—it is a torture!—and the devil in Jonson's play, did not perhaps greatly belie the truth, when he averred “that the pains in his native country were pastimes to the life of a person of Fashion.”

The Duke of Orleans received me the next morning with more than his wonted *bonhomie*. What a pity that so good natured a prince should have been so bad a man! He enlarged more easily and carelessly than his worthy preceptor had done, upon the several points to be observed in my mission—then very condescendingly told me he was very sorry to lose me from his court, and asked me, at all events, before I left Paris, to be a guest at one of his select suppers. I appreciated this honour at its just value. To these suppers, none were asked but the Prince's chums,

or *roués*,* as he was pleased to call them. As *entre nous* these chums were for the most part the most good for nothing people in the kingdom, I could not but feel highly flattered at being deemed by so deep a judge of character as the Regent, worthy to join them. I need not say that the invitation was eagerly accepted, nor that I left *Philippe le Débonnaire* impressed with the idea of his being the most admirable person in Europe. What a fool a great man is if he does not study to be affable—weigh a prince's condescension in one scale, and all the cardinal virtues in the other, and the condescension will outweigh them all. The Regent of France ruined his country as much as he well could do, and there was not a dry eye when he died. Even the memory of Charles II., who was both privately and publicly, the most consummate rascal that England ever saw, is to this day rather popular than otherwise. O, man-

* The term *Roué*, now so comprehensive, was first given by the Regent to a select number of his friends; according to them, because they would be broken on the wheel for his sake; according to himself, because they deserved to be so broken.—ED.

ner, manner, there is no hypocrite so succesful as you !

A day had now effected a change—a great change in my fate. A new court—a new theatre of action—a new walk of ambition, were suddenly opened to me. Nothing could be more promising than my first employment—nothing could be more pleasing than the anticipation of change. “ I must force myself to be agreeable to-night,” said I, as I dressed myself for the Regent’s supper. “ I must leave behind me the remembrance of a *bon mot*, or I shall be forgotten.”

And I was right. In that whirlpool, the capital of France, every thing sinks but wit—*that* is always on the surface, and we must cling to it with a firm grasp if we would not go down to—“ the deep oblivion.”

CHAPTER X.

Royal Exertions for the good of the People.

WHAT a singular scene was that private supper with the Regent of France and his *roués* ! The party consisted of twenty : nine gentlemen of the court besides myself, four men of low rank and character—but admirable buffoons—and six ladies, such ladies as the duke loved best—witty, lively, sarcastic, and good for nothing.

De Chatran accosted me.

“ *Je suis ravi, mon cher Monsieur Devereux,*” said he, gravely, “ to see you in such excellent company—you must be a little surprised to find yourself here !”

“ Not at all ! Every scene is worth one visit. He, my good Monsieur Chatran, who goes to the House of Correction once, is a philosopher—he who goes twice, is a rogue !”

“ Thank you, Count—what am I then—I have been *here* twenty times ?”

“ Why, I will answer you with a story. The soul of a Jesuit one night, when its body was asleep, wandered down to the lower regions ; Satan caught it, and was about to consign it to some appropriate place ; the soul tried hard to excuse itself : you know what a cunning thing a Jesuit’s soul is ! ‘ Monsieur Satan,’ said the spirit ; ‘ no king should punish a traveller as he would a native. Upon my honour, I am merely here *en voyageur*.’ ‘ Go, then, *mon père* !’ said *le bon* Satan, and the soul flew back to its body. But the Jesuit died, and came *à l’enfer* a second time. He was brought before his Satanic majesty, and made the same excuse. ‘ No, no,’ cried Beelzebub ; ‘ once here is to be only *le diable voyageur*—twice here, and you are *le diable tout bon*.’ ”

“ Ha! ha! ha!” said Chatran, laughing; “ I then am the *diable tout bon*! ’tis well I *am no worse*; for we reckon the *roués* a devilish deal worse than the very worst of the devils—but see, the Regent approaches us.’

And, leaving a very pretty and *enjouée* looking lady, the Regent sauntered towards us. It was in walking, by the by, that he lost all the grace of his mien. I don’t know, however, that one wishes a great man to be graceful, so long as he’s familiar.

“ Aha, Monsieur Devereux!” said he, “ we will give you some lessons in cooking to-night—we shall shew you how to provide for yourself in that barbarous country which you are about to visit. *Tout voyageur doit tout savoir!*”

“ A very admirable saying; which leads me to understand that *Monseigneur* has been a great traveller,” said I.

“ Ay, in all things and *all places*—eh, Count!” answered the Regent, smiling; “ but,” here he lowered his voice a little, “ I have never yet learnt how *you* came so opportunely to our assistance that

night. *Dieu me damne!* but it reminds me of the old story of the two sisters meeting at a gallant's house. 'Oh, sister, how came *you* here?' said one, in virtuous amazement. '*Ciel! ma sœur!*' cries other; 'what brought *you*?'*"

"Monseigneur is pleasant," said I, laughing; "but a man does now and then (though I own it is very seldom) do a good action, without having previously resolved to commit a bad one!"

"I like your parenthesis," cried the Regent, "it reminds me of my friend St. Simon, who thinks so ill of mankind, that I asked him, one day, whether it was possible for him to despise any thing more than men? 'Yes,' said he, with a low bow, 'women!'"

"His experience," said I, glancing at the female part of the coterie, "was, I must own, likely to lead him to that opinion."

"None of your sarcasms, Monsieur," cried the Regent. "*L'amusement est un des besoins de*

* The reader will remember a better version of this anecdote in one of the most popular of the English comedies.—ED.

l'homme—as I hear young *Arouet* very pithily said the other day ; and we owe gratitude to whomsoever it may be that supplies that want. Now, you will agree with me that none supply it like women ; therefore we owe them gratitude—therefore we must not hear them abused. Logically proved, I think !”

“ Yes, indeed,” said I, “ it is a pleasure to find they have so able an advocate ; and that your Highness can so well apply to yourself *both* the assertions in the motto of the great master of fortification, Vauban—‘ I destroy, but I defend.’ ”

“ Enough,” said the duke, *en riant*, “ now to *our fortifications* ;” and he moved away towards the women. I followed the royal example ; and soon found myself seated next to a pretty, and very small woman. We entered into conversation ; and, when once begun, my fair companion took care that it should not cease, without a miracle. By the goddess *Facundia*, what volumes of words issued from that little mouth ! and on all subjects too ! church—state—law—politics—play-houses—lampoons—

lace—liveries—kings—queens—roturiers---beggars—you would have thought, had you heard her, so vast was her confusion of all things, that chaos had come again. Our royal host did not escape her. “You never before supped here *en famille*,” said she,—“*Mon Dieu!* it will do your heart good to see how much the Regent will eat. He has such an appetite—you know he never eats any dinner, in order to eat the more at supper. You see that little dark woman he is talking to?—well, she is *Madame de Parabère*—he calls her his little black crow—was there ever such a pet name? Can you guess why he likes her? Nay, never take the trouble of thinking—I will tell you at once—simply because she eats and drinks so much. *Parole d’honneur* ’tis true. The Regent says he likes sympathy in all things!—is it not droll? What a hideous old man is that *Nocé*—his face looks as if it had caught the rainbow. That impudent fellow *Dubois* scolded him for squeezing so many *louis* out of the good Regent. The yellow creature attempted to deny the fact. ‘Nay,’ cried Dubois,

‘ you cannot contradict me ; I see their very ghosts in your face.’ ”

While my companion was thus amusing herself, *Nocé*, unconscious of her panegyric on his personal attractions, joined us.

“ Ah ! my dear *Nocé*,” said the lady, most affectionately, “ how well you are looking ! I am delighted to see you.”

“ I do not doubt it,” said *Nocé*, “ for I have to inform you that your petition is granted ; your husband will have the place.”

“ Oh, how eternally grateful I am to you !” cried the lady in an extacy ; “ my poor dear husband will be so rejoiced. I wish I had wings to fly to him !”

The gallant *Nocé* uttered a compliment—I thought myself *de trop*, and moved away. I again encountered *Chatran*.

“ I overheard your conversation with Madame la Marquise,” said he, smiling ; “ she has a bitter tongue—has she not ?”

“ Very ! how she abused the poor rogue *Nocé* !”

“ Yes, and yet he is her lover !”

“ Her lover !—you astonish me ; why, she seemed almost fond of her husband—the tears came in her eyes when she spoke of him.”

“ She *is* fond of him !” said Chatran, drily. “ She loves the ground he treads on—it is precisely for that reason she favours Nocé ; she is never happy but when she is procuring something *pour son cher bon mari*. She goes to spend a week at Nocé’s country house, and writes to her husband, with a pen dipped in *her blood*, saying, ‘ My heart is with thee !’ ”

“ Certainly,” said I, “ France is the land of enigmas ; the sphynx must have been a *Parisienne*. And when Jupiter made man, he made two natures utterly distinct from one another. One was *Human nature*, and the other *French nature* !”

At this moment supper was announced. We all adjourned to another apartment, where, to my great surprise, I observed the cloth laid—the sideboard loaded—the wines ready, but nothing to eat on the

table ! A Madame de Savori, who was next me, noted my surprise.

“ What astonishes you, Monsieur ?” said she.

“ *Nothing*, Madame !” said I, “ that is, the absence of *all* things.”

“ What ! you expected to see supper ?”

“ I own my delusion—I did.”

“ It is not cooked yet !”

“ Oh ! well, I can wait !”

“ And officiate too !” said the *petite Savori*;—“ in a word, this is one of the Regent’s cooking nights.”

Scarcely had I received this explanation, before there was a general adjournment to an inner apartment, where all the necessary articles for cooking were ready to our hand.

“ The Regent led the way,
To light us to our prey,”

and, with an irresistible gravity and importance of demeanour, entered upon the duties of *chef*. In a very short time we were all engaged. Nothing could exceed the zest with which every one seemed

to enter into the rites of the kitchen. You would have imagined they had been born scullions, they handled the *batterie de cuisine* so naturally. As for me, I sought protection with Madame de Savori ; and as, fortunately, she was very deeply skilled in the science, she had occasion to employ me in many minor avocations which her experience taught her would not be above my comprehension.

After we had spent a certain time in this dignified occupation, we returned to the *salle à manger*. The attendants placed the dishes on the table, and we all fell to. Whether out of self-love to their own performances, or complaisance to the performances of others, I cannot exactly say, but certain it is that all the guests acquitted themselves à *merveille* ; you would not have imagined the Regent the only one who had gone without dinner to eat the more at supper. Even that devoted wife to her *cher bon mari*, who had so severely dwelt upon the good Regent's infirmity, occupied herself with an earnestness, that would have seemed almost wolf-like in a famished grenadier.

Very slight indeed was the conversation till the supper was nearly over, then the effects of the wine became more perceptible. The Regent was the first person who evinced that he had eat sufficiently to be able to talk. Utterly dispensing with the slightest veil of reserve or royalty, he leant over the table, and poured forth a whole tide of jests. The guests then began to think it was indecorous to stuff themselves any more, and as well as they were able, they followed their host's example. But the most amusing personages were the buffoons : they mimicked, and joked, and lampooned, and lied, as if by inspiration. As the bottle circulated, and talk grew louder, the lampooning and the lying were not, however, confined to the buffoons. On the contrary, the best born, and best bred people, seemed to excel the most in those polite arts. Every person who boasted a fair name or a decent reputation at court, was seized, condemned, and mangled in an instant. And how elaborately the good folks slandered ! It was no hasty word and flippant repartee which did the business of the

absent—there was a precision, a polish, à labour of malice, which shewed that each person had brought so many reputations already cut up. The good natured convivialists differed from all other back-biters that I have ever met, in the same manner as the toads of Surinam differ from all other toads, viz.: their venomous offspring were not half formed, misshapen tadpoles of slander, but sprung at once into life—well shaped and fully developed.

“*Chantons !*” cried the Regent, whose eyes, winking and rolling, gave token of his approaching that state which equals the beggar to the king, “let us have a song. *Nocé*, lift up thy voice, and let us hear what the tokay has put into thy head !”

Nocé obeyed, and sang as men half drunk generally do sing.

“*O Ciel !*” whispered the malicious Savori, “what a hideous screech—one would think he had *turned his face into a voice !*”

“*Bravissimo !*” cried the duke, when his guest had ceased,—“what happy people we are ! Our

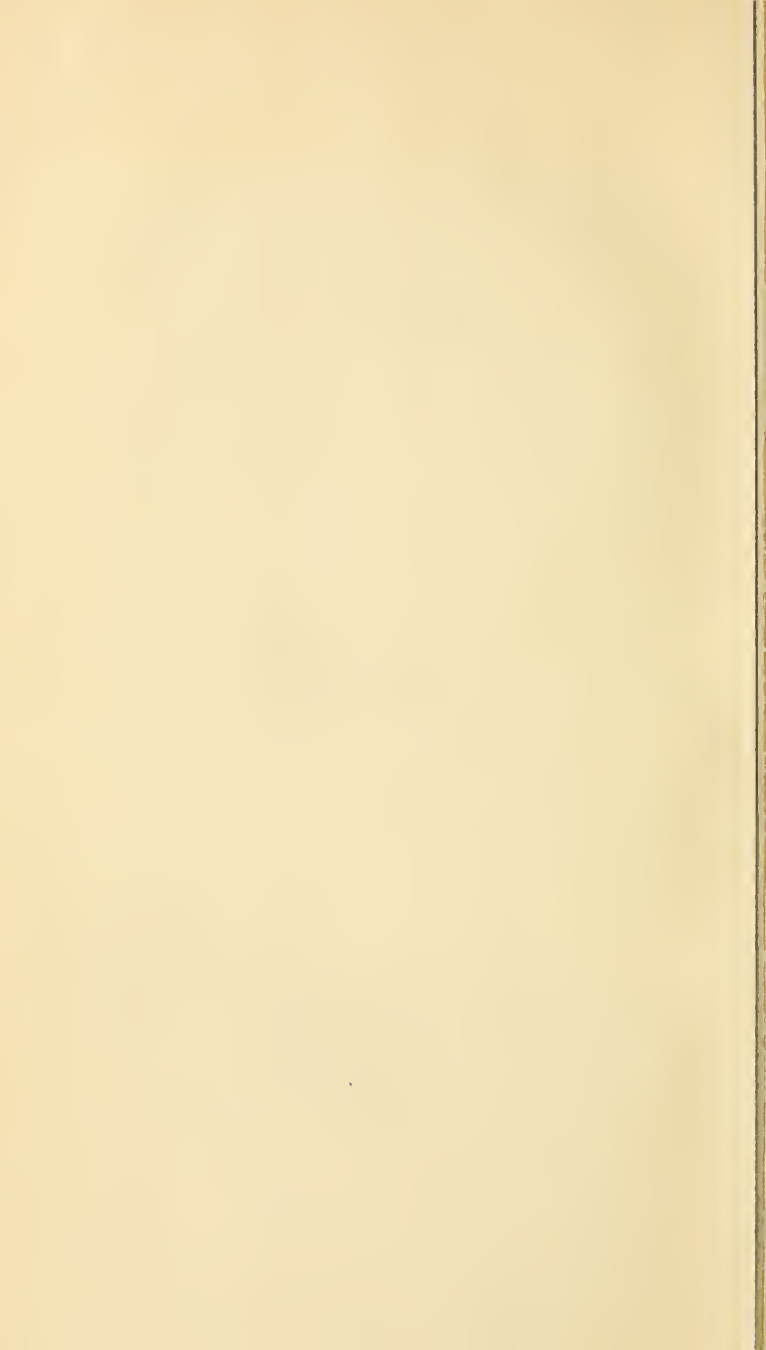
doors are locked—not a soul can disturb us—we have plenty of wine—we are going to get drunk—and we have all Paris to abuse! What were you saying of Marshal Villars, my little Parabère?”

And pounce went the little Parabère upon the unfortunate marshall. At last slander had a respite—nonsense began its reign—the full inspiration descended upon the orgies—the good people lost the use of their faculties. Noise—clamour, uproar, broken bottles, falling chairs, and—(I grieve to say) their occupants falling too—conclude the scene of the royal supper. Let us drop the curtain.

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